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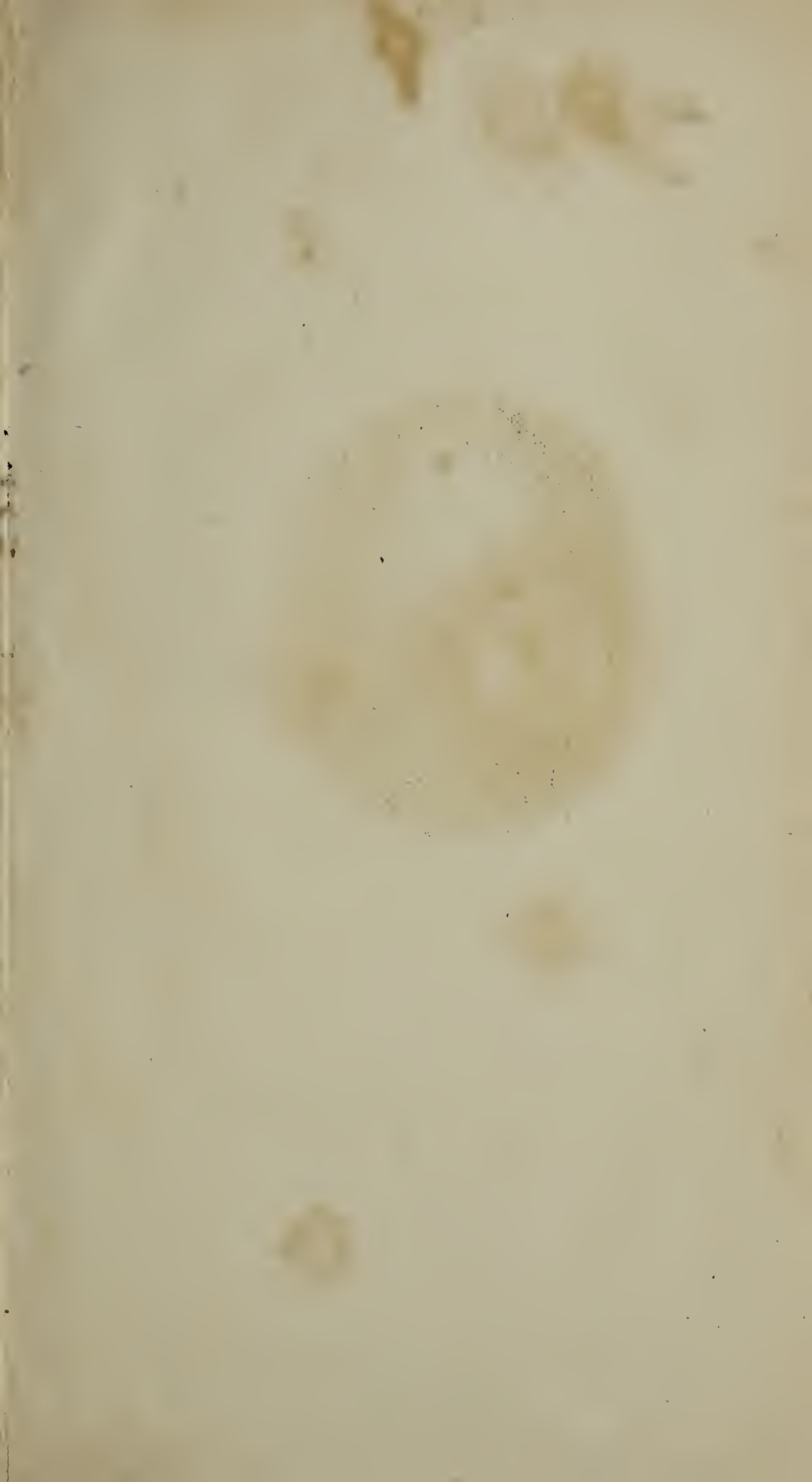
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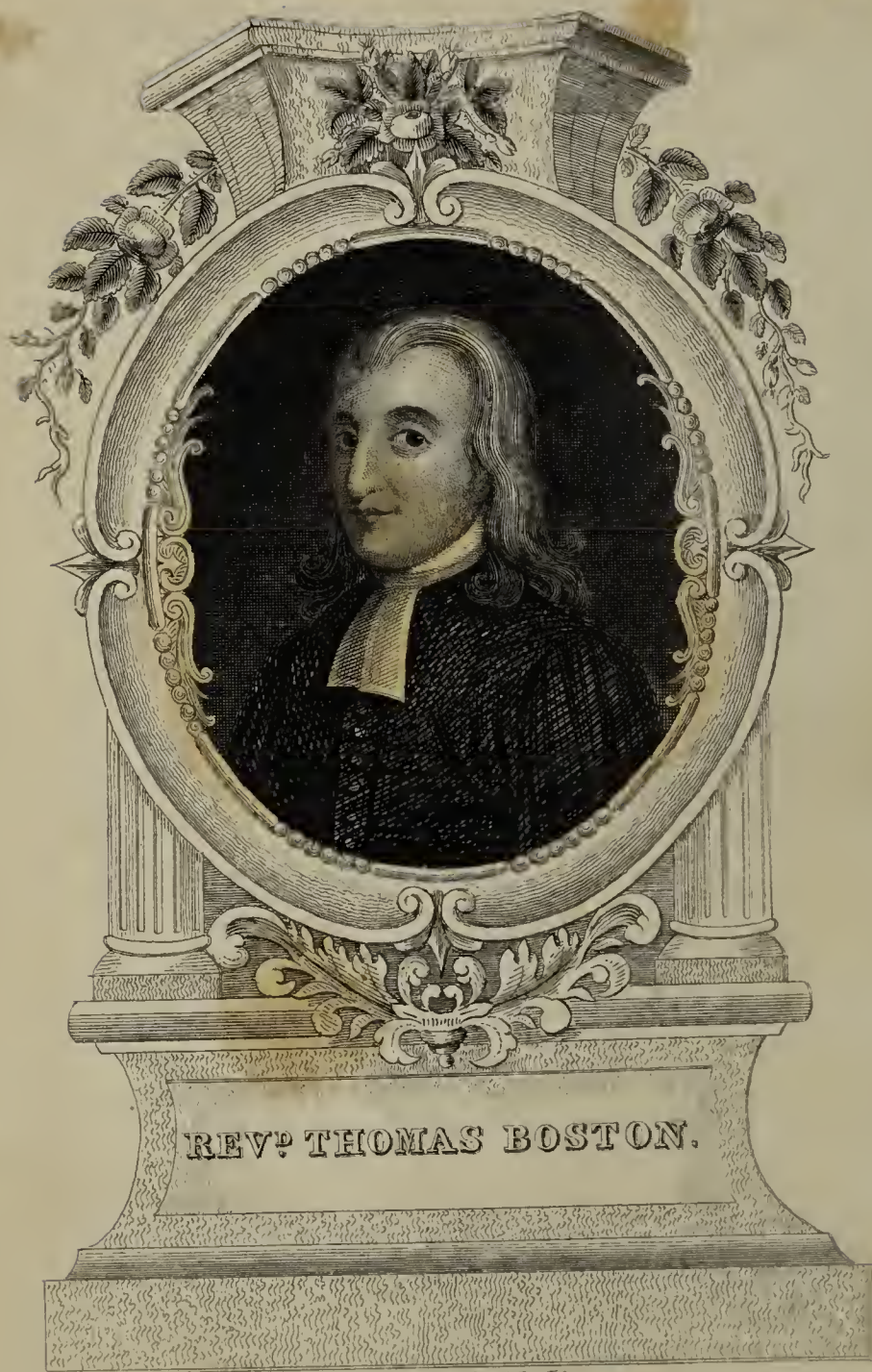
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Human nature in its fourfold
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Sel. Chm. Author

HUMAN NATURE
IN ITS
FOURFOLD STATE,

OF
PRIMITIVE INTEGRITY,
ENTIRE DEPRAVITY, BEGUN RECOVERY, AND
CONSUMMATE HAPPINESS OR MISERY.

BY THE
REV. THOMAS BOSTON,
LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, ETTRICK.

WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

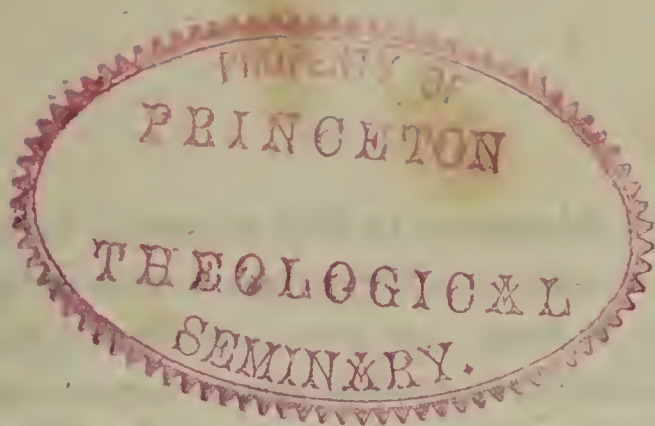
BY THE
REV. DAVID YOUNG,
PERTH.

GLASGOW :

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

AMIDST the multitude of books with which the religious public are now furnished, there are very few constructed on the principle of giving to the ignorant and serious inquirer, a connected or systematic view of his whole circumstances as a sinner, favoured with a dispensation of the gospel of the grace of God. We have systems of divinity not a few, which are easily accessible to the Christian minister: these, however, for the most part, are ponderous and recondite, requiring a leisure and a scholarship to unlock their treasures, which the multitude can never command; and, if we except the catechisms of our several churches—which are necessarily the organs of party peculiarities, and therefore limited in circulation—it may be said with truth, that of all the writers on Christian godliness, there is but one here and there who takes the bewildered child of trespass familiarly by the hand, and, descending to the level of his untutored capacity, gives him a clear and consecutive view of the innocence from which he has fallen; the misery in which he is involved; the economy of restoration under which he is situated; and the hope.

which, by submitting to that economy, he may warrantably entertain. One cause of this deficiency, in our times at least, may be a concern on the part of authors to meet the public taste ; for our systems in general are so old, and partake so much of science and controversy, or descend to details so minute and perplexing, that the general reader has contracted a dislike, not only to their subtleties and supposed redundancies, but to the very form in which they are set forth. If he opens a book which calls itself a system, and looks at its size and number of pages, he seldom has courage to proceed with it farther. Thus the writer is strongly tempted to meet the taste as he finds it, instead of attempting the arduous task of making it what it ought to be. He thinks it better to write a book which is likely to be read, than put himself to the useless trouble of writing what will not be read ; and thus he holds himself completely vindicated in humouring the current of popular propensity.

This would be a proper decision if that propensity were right, or if the bias given to it were absolutely incurable ; for it is better to do some good on a bad system, than remain inactive altogether. But our religious authorship should bear in mind, that, so far as the manner of instruction is concerned, they are *dictators* to the popular taste ; and that it can be nothing, at any one time, but what they have made it, or allowed it to become. This is the post of high responsibility, which as a body they necessarily occupy ; and we fearlessly say to them, that at this very day, in several important points of view, they are not judiciously true to their trust. One class of them,

we rejoice to think, are giving out treatises on every variety of Christian topic, which are clear, and solid, and rigidly thought; but—not to speak of those who are heated even to madness in extravagant allegorizings, which make religion ridiculous in the eyes of the profane—another class of them are straining every nerve to keep the public continually occupied with shallow and fugitive periodicals, or showy and frivolous separate productions, which depend for acceptance on scarcely any thing but tales, and anecdotes, and fits of feeling, with semi-fictitious biography, and wildly-written religious romance. We admit that there is a time of life, and there are states of mind at any time of life, when the flowers of popular literature, or the vivacity of sober fiction, may be rendered an excellent auxiliary, if suitably applied, to the communication of saving instruction. We admit also, that a portion of fugitive reading, when judiciously got up, and skilfully connected with the current of passing events, is not only allowable, but absolutely necessary to a proper acquaintance with the present state of the religious world. For so interesting are the times in which we live, that a man cannot conduct himself as the spirit of his age requires, without a constant communication, not only with his own neighbourhood, but with the regions of religious enterprise, which are so diversified and full of incident throughout the world at large.

But if the time shall ever come—and we fear it is coming rapidly, if not already arrived—when such compositions as are sketched above shall be the *staple* commodity in the market of printed instruction; if the Christian, especially in his youth, shall be trained,

or permitted to depend on them, as the sum total of his daily reading; if, just because they are popular, and promise applause to the author, they shall be furnished to the reader in teeming abundance and attractive variety, till his taste for them has become exclusive, and his dislike to the solid and healthful aggravated and confirmed, the result will speedily show itself in a woful deterioration of religious character, and a certain exposure to dangers, which may soon turn our present godliness into utter desolation.

This conclusion is summary; but we mean to keep sight of it in the few following pages: and what we have to say in its support, may be naturally enough connected with a brief detail of the advantages of systematic reading, as a means of strengthening Christian belief, and consolidating Christian character. By systematic reading, however, we do not mean those ponderous accumulations of miscellaneous lore, whether crude or digested, which are gathered indiscriminately from the field of general theology; nor those treasures of sacred philology, which confirm the faith of the learned, by clearing and settling the true import of the language of inspiration; nor the productions of that sagacious metaphysic, which is disciplined to the nicest discrimination, and has elaborated the distinction between truth and error out to the very uttermost; nor yet those massive structures of systematized principle, which, although skilfully compacted and justly proportioned, exhibit little else than the dry light of science, or the unadorned mechanism of ratiocination. No, certainly. These are things which we venerate in the departments to which they belong; and the names appended to many of them

are symbols of durable renown. But we will not frighten the common reader, by so much as seeming to insinuate that his enlightened acquaintance with the Christian economy is necessarily dependent on inquiries so intricate. What we mean by system, in relation to him, is to be found in those books, or that selection of books, which, instead of simply stirring his feelings, or aiming at mere impression, by a desultory eloquence or showy declamation on the one extreme, or teasing him with subtleties on the other, embraces the subject in its entirety, and carries him regularly through it with simplicity and clearness; explaining the nature of the Christian economy, and the moral condition of the human family, on which it is superinduced; forming it into instructive arrangement, under the guidance of the sacred record; unfolding its peculiar genius, and the dependence of its parts on each other; tracing up its doctrines and remedial provisions, to that stupendous moral achievement which gives to every one of them its life and efficiency: and thus enabling him to judge of its character from its own intrinsic illuminations—giving him, in short, a system in every thing but bulk and forbidding technicality, but investing the whole with that majesty of scriptural illustration, and imbuing it with that intensity of holy practical interest, which awes him into submission as he proceeds, and invites him to imbibe the spirit of the economy, while he is led to contemplate its concentrated glories.

This is what we mean by system, in the use we at present make of the word; and we should like the reader to go along with us, in devout concern for his Christian well-being, while we proceed in detailing a

few of its advantages. Before proceeding, however, it is proper to say, that we are very far from supposing that a man must be an adept in the knowledge of Christianity, before he can believe it to the saving of his soul. We know its power and sovereignty to be such, that a single statement of its doctrines, or a single promise of its efficacy, may lead him at once to a state of salvation; while not a few of its essential principles may be as yet unknown to him. But what we have chiefly in view is, the education of the man who is already a believer, or the case of the man who is kept from believing, or embarrassed in his belief, by certain intellectual difficulties, which his inattention to the proper means must tend to strengthen and multiply; and, in reference to all such, we state the following things in commendation of the kind of reading already described:—

I. It is congenial to our rational nature. We are reasoning beings, and irrepressibly prone to reason on all subjects that come before us, whether physical or metaphysical, material or mental. When a statement of good is propounded to us, on evidence which carries our assent, we subject it instantly to a process of reasoning, and turn it by anticipation into a source of immediate enjoyment. Where tidings of evil are propounded, we go to work in the same way, and speedily reason ourselves into the sorrows of which they furnish the materials. And when objects of interest are set before us, in which we have no immediate property for either good or evil, our curiosity is awakened: we display a love of speculation which is altogether gratuitous, and are actually reasoning on their nature and uses, ere ever we are

aware. To this we are uniformly addicted, in all climes and countries, from the first opening of our infant faculties up to the extremity of old age. Now this is not to be restrained, but encouraged; it is not the disease of our nature, but our nature itself acting according to the constitution which the Creator at first imparted to it, although the results of the activity are often such as sadly to indicate the moral calamity with which it is afflicted.

But to *systematize* is to reason. It is so to exercise our understandings on the objects of our previous knowledge, as to adjust and arrange them according to their several properties and affinities, that our view of them, individually and combined, may be rendered distinct and satisfactory. This is an exercise of reason of which we are peculiarly fond, and which begins to be exemplified, without any training, at a very early period of our existence in this world. Present to a child a confused heap of pebbles and sea-shells, or other little objects of curiosity which exhibit sameness as well as diversity, and after making himself acquainted with their resemblances and discrepances in size, form, colour, and so on, he proceeds to arrange them accordingly, putting each of them in the place which is best fitted to give unity and harmony to the whole; and while he feels a peculiar satisfaction in the result of his labours, he is greatly annoyed by any accident which disturbs the classification, or throws them back into their previous confusion. This process, which he seems to be taught by something similar to instinct, improves his view of the objects in question, and yields a delight in the contemplation of them which he could

not otherwise have experienced. Well, we have here the elements of system appearing prior to all training; and nothing can be a clearer proof, that the tendency to such exercises is ours as the gift of our wise Creator, to regulate our efforts, and facilitate our success in the acquisition and use of knowledge.

But religion stands pre-eminent among all the subjects of knowledge to which our reason has access. It is for the sake of it, and its felicities and adorations, that we are made to differ from the beasts that perish, and created capable of thought and reflection. Although its topics be numerous and somewhat diversified, they have all a striking generic resemblance, and must be subjected to skilful arrangement, in order to be seen to proper advantage. They are not like stars in different hemispheres, or independent luminaries, but one entire constellation, each of them emitting a light which tends to unfold its own glory, while at the same time it illumines the others, and is illumined by the others; thus rendering an intimate acquaintance not with itself only, but with its position and relations, of very great importance to a right understanding of the scheme of truth, of which it forms a part. Religion, in fact, is a *system* of moral illumination; and, among all the subjects of methodical study to which man has ever applied his reason, we know not of any one where a knowledge of the affinities and relations of its parts is more imperiously called for, in order to an adequate conception of the whole. If man, then, be prone to system in his ordinary intellectual exercise, and if Christianity requires its aid more than many other subjects, the man who denies himself this auxiliary in the course of his Christian reading, or is virtually

taught to neglect it by the indiscretion of others, must be subjected to serious disadvantage. His reason must be resisted or contravened in one of its powerful natural tendencies; and it is clear that this resistance must necessarily tend to embarrass and disconcert, and of course to discourage the productive operations of reason in this most interesting department. It is not possible to conceive, that such contravention can do less than prevent the formation of those habits which alone can lead the logical being to a logical hold of religion in the eternal consistency of its truth, and the grandeur of its ultimate principles; and thus give a sanction, which is indirect but real, to the too common prejudice, that, while the topics of every other subject which man is invited to study, can be gathered up into beautiful series, and opened progressively to the view in most instructive combination, religion forbids us to be reasoners, and demands to be considered in no other light than as a maze of sublime confusion. We say not that the mysteries of religion are to be explored by reason; for, just because they are revealed as mysteries, on evidence which proves them true, it is reason's office to believe them on that ground alone. Nor do we favour the impious tenet, that reason, in her present moral bewilderment, or in any condition whatever, should be raised to the honour of being the test of the truth or untruth of revelation. But what we say is, that the evidence of revelation is proposed by God as a subject for reason's examination, not only with the view of producing assent, but for rendering that assent enlightened and steady after it is produced; and that the facts and doctrines of revelation thus become

matters of fixed belief, open up a region of most interesting realities, which reason is required religiously to traverse after her own manner, and in the exercise of her own skill, that, in this way, the truth revealed may have its proper and constitutional place in the soul of the man who receives it.

And we know, that where this exercise is neglected, or in proportion as it is neglected, where religious thinking is undisciplined, capricious, and desultory, flitting from topic to topic, or from book to book, without plan or rational arrangement, religious knowledge is ever found to be shallow and superficial. It may be genuine or pure, or connected with a heart which is exquisitely tender, or deeply devotional, so far as mere feeling is concerned—it may suit a useless retirement, or prosper in the hot-bed of congenial companionship, where the mind is easy and tranquil—but it cannot stand the storms of error and unbelief, which never cease to agitate the exposures of human life. If you keep it in seclusion, it may dream its way to heaven in unprofitable ignorance of the state of things around it, but the plan of Providence forbids you to keep it there: and if you place it on the arena of this wide world, where the war of ungodliness is incessantly prosecuted in all its forms of disciplined eagerness, its possessor will speedily find himself to be helpless as a babe. It is this very defect in the mode of religious training, which causes many a beautiful morning in the history of the rising race to be followed by a dismal noon. Our youth are sent forth on promiscuous society, with some impressions in favour of religion, and a few incipient habits of piety, but with

scarcely any armour of defence beyond a few pious counsels, and a multitude of good wishes. They soon come to see what they never saw before, and meet with what they never heard of. Ungodliness sets its fashion, and adduces its ingenious argument, but they have nothing appropriate to reply : and what can they do when worsted in argument, especially when propensity is on its side, but give way to the victor's ruinous conclusions, and fall into the course which he points out to them ? All this, and much more than this, is often the result of resisting reason, or neglecting to bring it fully into exercise in the details of a youthful education. And what else could be expected from an error so gross and flagrant ? Reason must be owned as the glory of man, the sole pre-eminence of his nature, that which raised him up to God through the medium of creation and providence, so long as his nature was innocent, and that which is now to raise him up to the knowledge and enjoyment of the same blessed object, through the dispensation of his grace in the gospel. It is at once the instrument and recipient, the residence and the guardian, of all saving knowledge, without which we are not in any measure susceptible of the religious enjoyment provided for us ; and if this same reason shall be crippled in its energies, or curtailed in the range of its legitimate operations, by any prejudice or inadvertence, a serious injury must be done to our present religious well-being.

Let no one take alarm at the latitude of this language. We know the helplessness of unsanctified reason, and the indispensable necessity of spiritual influence, in order to render it productive : but these

are not the topics at present before us, and no damage can be done to them by keeping the topic which is before us prominent in its own place, and giving it fearlessly all its due.

It is objected, we know, to this view of the subject, that the Bible is not a system of divinity even in our sense of the word, and that it ought ever to be regarded, not only as the perfect standard of religious truth, but also as a perfect specimen of the best mode of exhibiting the truth. The first part of this statement we admit. The Bible is not, in respect of form, a system of divinity; and we can discover some of the reasons, although perhaps not all of them, why its Author chose to give it forth in the form in which we find it. The many ages which were required to complete it, and the diversified circumstances of the church and world at the times when its portions were severally given, must necessarily have influenced the form in which it now appears. Besides, the form of a regular system is too like the weakness of man, and too unlike the mind that is infinite, to be adopted in a revelation from heaven; and, perhaps, it was a chief reason for avoiding this form, that man, being furnished with matter and directions for the work, might enjoy the healthful and much-needed exercise, as prompted by his own necessities, of forming it into system for himself. But while we admit that the Bible is not a system, although it contains one, and while we hold it as indisputably the perfect standard of religious truth, we cannot see that it was ever intended to be a perfect specimen of the best mode of exhibiting the truth to the minds of ignorant men. From this opinion we decidedly dis-

sent, and we go to the Bible itself for our reasons of dissent. It nowhere claims the kind of perfection which is thus so hastily ascribed to it; and it contains an express provision, which, by clear and easy inference, is seen to be inconsistent with any such claim. Independently altogether of the inspired men who were raised up each in his day to make additions to its treasures, it contains the appointment, by solemn divine ordination, of an order of uninspired men, possessing certain qualifications which it specifies, and having it for their specific work to go with the Bible wherever it goes, nay, to carry it forth, explaining and enforcing it, in its spirit and tendency, to the guilty and ignorant children of men. This order of men are set up, and commanded to keep their place, as pastors and teachers, between the Bible and those to whom it is sent: not to keep them away from the Bible, but to conciliate their love to it, by unfolding its truth and excellence; to form and strengthen, and render general, the habit of enlightened intercourse with it. Much might be said of the contents of the Bible, its chronology, its connection with the history of the world, its prophecies, its abrupt poetic style, its manner of stating doctrines, to show that this order of men was necessary; but we need not go into disquisition when we have the fact before us. The very appointment of these men, and the sphere to which they are assigned, must stand forth till the end of time as an undeniable proof, that the Bible is not, and never was, intended to be sufficient without them, for bringing men generally to the knowledge of salvation. The Bible has its place, and it fills that place in the high perfection

of its Author's purpose; but they too have their place in relation to the Bible, which must also be filled, in order to bring it out to the plenitude of its usefulness. But how are they to fill their place? Not by literally following the Bible in the order in which it lies, nor by simply repeating portions of it, however well selected; but by copying its order, or deviating from that order as circumstances may require; by amplifying or abridging its lessons of instruction to suit particular cases, or meet particular necessities, in the progress of their ministrations; by freely but judiciously modifying the Bible, so far as official dexterity is concerned, into an adaptation to the several stages of ignorance or depravity, or Christian attainment; and thus making it suitably to bear on the variously modified states of society, in which they may be called to proclaim its tidings. Their commission is to evangelize and feed, *by teaching* from the Bible, as, in every instance, their guide and text-book—thus holding it forth in its purity and entireness; but they never can *teach* with any thing like clearness or effective force, without obeying the dictates of their own educated reason, and thus adopting the mode of procedure which we are endeavouring to recommend. They must employ their own language, as well as that of the Spirit of God. They must exercise their own judgment, and make use of their own experience, and be influenced by their own knowledge of human nature, in its varied circumstances and conditions; but they must also prosecute their own devices of method and arrangement, in order suitably to fill the sphere which God has marked out for them. This they necessarily must

do, just because they are uninspired human beings, ordained *to teach* their human brethren the knowledge of God in Christ. They cannot elucidate a single topic without digesting it into regular method; and, in proportion as the digest is clear and consecutive, the better is the topic taught, and the better reason have they to expect the blessing of God on their labours. Well, this is system; but if system be thus necessary to elucidate a part of the grand scheme of Christian doctrine, it is yet more necessary to elucidate the whole; for it is obvious to every one who thinks at all, that, in proportion as a subject becomes enlarged and complicated, the inquirer feels it the more necessary to be rigid in his adherence to logical method, as the only possible means of carrying him correctly through it. It is this which strengthens his weakness, and relieves his conscious helplessness, amidst the mazes of gathering thought; obviating that which is dubious, simplifying that which is complex, reducing to order that which is confused; and thus inviting him onwards, with confidence and delight, in his career of sacred research. But if the exercise of this faculty be so necessary to the man who is ordained to educate Christians, its advantages ought to be sedulously cultivated by those who are the subjects of Christian education. They, as well as he, are uninspired, and therefore left dependent on it. It is chiefly as an instrument of good to them that he is bound to use it; and if they shall allow themselves to dislike it, or to remain incapable of appreciating its use, either in books or oral instruction, they are chargeable with defeating the chief end for which he was appointed over them.

It is foolish, then, to speak of the Bible as in any way forbidding the use of systematic arrangement in the communication of religious knowledge. So far you see from forbidding this, it has assigned a task to a permanent order of uninspired men, which they cannot possibly execute without the aid of this instrument; thus placing them in circumstances, in which they are not only permitted to bring into operation all the resources of their uninspired reason, but absolutely constrained to do so, in order to a proper fulfilment of their ministry. This is the fact, and the practical result corresponds with it; for it is undeniable, not only that there are many passages of the Bible, which can, by skilful human effort, be brought nearer to the capacities of men, than they are as they lie there; but also, that, by the same means, the whole scheme of its doctrines can be so combined and exhibited to the considerate private Christian, as to give him a clearer insight into the connections of its parts, and a fuller view of its moral grandeur, than he ever could have reached by the unaided study of his Bible. In saying these things, and denying, as they show we do, that the Bible is to be taken throughout as a specimen of the best method of communicating knowledge immediately to ignorant men, we do not disparage that sacred record in any way whatever, but rescue it from the injury which a pious indiscretion has too often done to it, and to the objects which it embraces, by ascribing to it that which it clearly disowns. It is true, that the Bible, without a living instructor, is still an inestimable treasure, and may be the means of salvation to those who faithfully peruse it; but it is also true, that by itself

it is only a part, and not the whole, of heaven's gracious provision for our depraved and darkened world. The best way to judge of any production is, by comparing it with the place it was intended to fill, or with the end it was intended to serve; and not with any fancy of our own, which its Author never contemplated. The Bible is a divine revelation, and it appears in the form which best suits it as a divine revelation; but it is a revelation which was intended not to do its work alone, but to be brought into practical effect by a consecrated human agency, acting intermediately between it and the souls of men; and every thing we can mention about it which tends to give scope for this agency, or to show our need of its operations, so far from depreciating the Bible, does in fact exalt it in the adoring esteem of every enlightened inquirer.

Besides, we are far from being entitled to say, whether that form or internal structure which best becomes the Bible as a supernatural revelation, could have been made at the same time compatible with the best mode of instilling its contents into the minds of sinful men. We know that the structure actually given to it is not throughout of this description, and therefore a distinct provision has been superadded; but, for any thing we know, it could not have been otherwise, in consistency with the perfection of divine wisdom. The two kinds of excellence—that which befits a revelation, and that which best disseminates its doctrines—may be so distinct, or even different in their nature, as compared with the condition of man, that they could not have co-existed in the same inspired record, without diminishing the effect in-

tended by the one and by the other, on hearts and consciences depraved by sin. All this, we say, may be, and more might be said, could we prosecute the theme. But, if it be barely possible, we should beware of ascribing to the Bible a lower excellence which it does not claim, and which is not necessarily supernatural, even at the *possible* expense of interfering with a higher excellence which it does claim, and on which its evidence as a divine revelation to a great extent depends. We know we are here pleading for a latitude of departure from *the manner of the word of God*, which may give offence to some whom we have no wish to see offended. But these persons ought to remember, that the manner of the Bible, so far as it is superhuman and affects the texture of its revelations, is God's manner, and not ours; but, being God's, it is necessarily inimitable, and not intended to be copied by us; for it is human agency, and nothing more than human agency, religiously actuated, but proceeding after the manner of man, which God requires in him who teaches his revealed will to human beings. Any thing higher than this, would be above the sphere which he has prescribed to this office; and any thing lower, would be beneath that sphere.

These opinions, however, are usually most obnoxious to those persons who are too indolent to exercise their reason, and too obstinate to admit conviction, but wish to be hid from merited censure, under a mask of veneration for the example of the word of God: or to the yet more exceptionable class of teachers, whose pampered official vanity, or whimsical eccentricity, has led them presumptuously to

claim for themselves a kind of demi-inspiration, which entitles them, as they suppose, to construct theories, and enunciate opinions, which they dare not attempt to reconcile with the Bible, and which are utterly irreducible to systematic coherence. The displeasure of these persons we hold very cheap; and the desire of defeating their mischievous influence, we frankly confess to be one of our reasons for wishing to see the love of system revived and propagated. In the hands of the first class, the office of Christian teaching has sunk into an imbecility which conceals the wisdom, and obstructs the merciful designs, of Him who ordained it; and in the hands of the second, it would soon produce a medley of theological opinion, fortuitous and formless as original chaos, but for the happy circumstance that it is too palpably absurd, and too glaringly ridiculous, ever to come into general currency. They may have their day, and their locality, and their number of votaries—and who has not, that chooses to practise on human simplicity?—but they never can make head against the rigid consistency of revealed truth, and the disciplined soberness of sanctified reason.

II. It tends to reduce Christian sentiment to the form and power of settled principle. Christianity is obviously a religion of practice; and the more its spirit comes out into practice, as a spirit of holiness and love, the nearer it reaches to that perfection to which it is destined in the church below. But few, we believe, will dispute the maxim, that, in order to give permanence to any system of practice, whether holy or unholy, we must lay its foundations deep in principle. So long as exertion, whether single or

associated, is the result of mere feeling, however highly excited, or is left to be fostered by casual stimulants applied to the affections rather than the judgment, it is weak and fitful, and easily suppressed. But if you trace it up to ascertained principle, and thus bring it into alliance with our fundamental elements of thought, you do as much as can be done to give it identity with our powers of action; you set it on the surest footing, and place it in the fairest attitude for uniform perseverance. For it is principle, and not passion; it is the power of inward rooted conviction, and not the glare of plausible appearance, which can so overcome the torpor of our nature, as to render it regularly workable in any assignable line of activity. We cannot propose at present to account for this maxim by any illustration of that tenacity of principle, which is so manifestly a part of the human constitution, and so uniformly shows itself in human practice, according to the varieties of our moral condition, as depraved, or as renovated by the grace of God; although this we take to be the undoubted origin of the power which principle puts forth to excite or consolidate moral achievement. There is in the mind of man a veneration for principle, a strong disposition to do it homage, which sin itself has not eradicated, although it has greatly debased it; and to this disposition our appeal must be made, in all cases where we wish to keep him steady as the ally of our measures.

True indeed, there are seasons amidst the fluctuations of human affairs, when passion may be rendered available, and when the heavy artillery of principle may move too slowly to be of any use. If the leader

of a multitude has a barrier to burst, a solitary point of benevolence to carry, or a single blow of vengeance to inflict, he may address the passions, and work them into a tempest, and attain his object at once by an instant burst of their impetuosity. But if he has a cause to propagate, which depends for its prosperity on acceptance with the public, he must leave the passions asleep, or venture to stir them no farther than may serve, by a gentle swell of emotion, to ingratiate his opinions. So general is the truth of this maxim, that, so far as mere power is concerned, it does not matter very much whether that which is called principle be true or false, sound or unsound, useful or injurious in its tendencies to action. So far as it is taken for genuine principle, it comes with the energy which principle possesses on the mind of the man who embraces it, and binds him to the cause with which you connect it; because it is justified to his understanding, and not merely to his momentary feelings.

Those who gave establishment to false religions, were acquainted with this secret, and dismally skilful in making use of it. They saw very well, that although the tide of mere feeling might be made to flow in coincidence with their wishes for a time, yet there was nothing in feeling itself to prevent an untimely reflux; and therefore they found it necessary to mould their measures into the form of principles, and plant them in the consciences of men, as the only possible means of gaining them permanent favour. So entirely did they feel themselves dependent on this expedient, that, when their principles became so monstrous as to expose them to the detection

even of the most untutored minds, they still proclaimed them as principles solid and essential; but enshrined them in mystery, and raised up around them a mockery of veneration, which awes the deluded votary, and deters him from rational inquiry. The lowest demagogues are aware of the expedient, and without it feel themselves powerless; and a recent statesman was awfully aware of it, when, in taking something like a prophetic survey of Europe's political acrimony, he told Britain, in Parliament assembled, and told the world at large, as the darkest feature of the dreaded conflict, that it was likely to prove itself a war of opinions. A war of passions, like the sweep of the tempest, may expend itself and be gone; but a war of principles, like the course of nature, is steady and resistless, and settles only in extermination.

Now, this is precisely the footing on which Christianity must be placed, in order to deepen its roots, and realize its power, either in the conscience of an individual, or in society at large. That it produces feelings we are aware, and feelings too the most exalted and pleasurable; but these feelings are pure and healthful, and acquire the steadiness of nature, only in as far as its sublime doctrines are understood and appropriated, and thus exalted to that ascendancy which principle alone can maintain. It is pre-eminently a matter of principle, containing, not simply a remedy for our nature's moral disorder, but the essential and immutable elements of all religious truth; and it cannot be taken for what it is, nor accomplish the mighty moral revolution for which it is promulgated, except in as far as it holds the place, and exerts the influence, which belongs to principle of the

highest order. But we are to remember, that, just because it is a system of truth at war with a working system of error, its individual principles, like the constituents of an army, must be marshalled, in order to be effective. Taken separately, they possess an excellence, and display an adaptation to our forlorn condition, which more or less clearly evince their divinity; but, like the members of the human body, we must see them in combination, each filling its own place, and contributing its own part to the symmetry and strength of the whole structure, in order to acquire an adequate conception of its intrinsic or relative efficiency. All the truths in the universe, of whatsoever class or kind, are bound together by reciprocal relations, the study of which is very serviceable to a suitable acquaintance with their powers or properties; and the eye which can trace their subtile affinities, perceives them all converging towards, and finding their eternal consistency in, the simple unity of the Godhead. But what are called theological truths, especially the truths of the Christian theology, are peculiarly of this description; so obviously and so intimately connected, that the man who looks at any one of them, as isolated from all the rest, and makes it the subject of reflection in this detached form, is in danger, at every step, of carrying it out into consequences which its place in the system forbids, and which lay a foundation in his own mind for a multitude of misconceptions.

This, we should think, is so clear, that it cannot be seen without being admitted; but if it be admitted, it brings along with it the other admission, that nothing but the means of systematic information can

give to the doctrines of Christianity that coherence of parts, or concentration of light and power upon the conscience of an individual, which is necessary to its *full* effect on the formation of his Christian character. Without this, in short, the scheme of Christian truth, viewed as a whole, cannot be reduced, in his mind at least, to the form and effectiveness of settled principle. His views of any one topic must be not only crude and impoverished, but in a state of positive discord with his views of other topics; and what else can be his impression, in such a state of mind, than that there is a schism in the body of truth, as there too often is in the body of those who profess it; and that this schism is a good reason for doubting or denying its claims to divinity? Or, if fear should restrain him from a result so awful, there are other evils entailed by such confusion, which are neither few nor easily defeated. It must interfere with Christian practice, and enfeeble the exercise of Christian virtue, in all its departments, and in all its forms, whether social or individual. It is true that faith, and not mere knowledge, is the origin of evangelical obedience; and that the Christian whose knowledge is very limited, confused, and incoherent, may yet be most exemplary in his conformity to Christian law, because his heart is really sanctified, and his whole soul influenced by the fear of God. But it is also true, and worthy of deep attention, that this conformity is often estimated at more than it is really worth; for knowledge is essential to the very existence of that obedience which the Christian law requires. Obedience to God, in any sense that is competent to man, is the intelligent act of his intelligent

creature; and Christian obedience is just the result of sound Christian information purifying the Christian's conscience and regulating his will. Faith is the spring of obedience, and without faith there can be none; but as knowledge is necessary prior to belief—as the means of perceiving the thing to be believed, and of discerning the grounds of its claim to confidence—it is no less necessary after belief, as a means of strengthening the believer's hold of those rich and precious doctrines, which are thus made the matter of his belief, and which, just because they are so, his mind can now examine as glorious realities. But if faith be the spring of obedience, and knowledge the food of faith, the amount of obedience, as an expression of enlightened homage to the eternal Lawgiver, must in all cases be measured by the extent of the person's believing acquaintance, not merely with the number, but with the nature and relations, of the doctrines and precepts of that economy under which he presents it. There is not, and there cannot possibly be, a single particle of genuine obedience in any act of conformity to any one precept of God's revealed will, beyond the point at which he ceases to be really (that is, believably) discerned in that precept, as understood in itself, or illumined by other parts of the revelation to which it belongs. It is not deeds of conformity to precept, however punctually or gravely performed, but accordance of soul with the spirit of precept, as expressed by these deeds, which alone can bear the character of genuine obedience. The man, of course, is fittest for obedience, who has imbibed most of the spirit of the law; but the spirit of the law can only be im-

bibed, so far as human means are concerned, by devoutly digesting its principles, as unfolding the character of the Lawgiver. In looking, then, at that obedience which labours its way amidst clouds of ignorance, and much incoherence of religious opinion, we are compelled to pronounce it greatly defective; and have no hesitation in affirming, that, do for it what you may, its deficiencies must continue, until it be supplied with the light, and vigour, and enlargement of a clear and consecutive course of instruction. It may be sincere, or scrupulous, or uniform; but it is prompted by fear more than by adoration, and gives to religion an aspect of gloominess which is no part of its nature. Or, even when its spirit is warm and filial, and seems contented and happy, it reminds you of fondness rather than love; falling greatly short of that "reasonable service," which is suited at once to the nature of man, and to the claims of those spiritual institutes under which his Creator has placed him.

This is one of the prominent evils which result from the indiscretion of pampering the volatile taste of the age, instead of schooling it down to principle; and the man who patiently traces the evil, as it shows itself in the details of life, will not easily convince himself that it can be safely overlooked. There are other evils, however, in some respects of greater magnitude, which are also very prevalent, and must be traced to the same cause. Christians, in their successive generations, are the *trustees* of Christian doctrine. It is consigned to them as a sacred deposit, for the preservation and the use of which they are held responsible to its Author: "God has chosen Zion;" but he has done so that he may "set his

name there :" "he has established a testimony," and "*given it to Jacob :*" "he has appointed a law," and "*ordained it for Israel.*" "What advantage hath the Jew, and what profit is there in circumcision?" are questions capable of a christianized reply. What advantage have we Christians, and what profit is there in belonging to the Christian church? "Much every way: chiefly because unto *us are committed* the oracles of God. To *us* pertain the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." The whole word of revelation, in its doctrines and ordinances, and life-giving efficacy, is entailed on the church as her exclusive inheritance; but still she holds it as a formal trust for the good of a destitute world, as well as for her own immediate advantage; for where but in the church, or in manifest connection with her, has the health of salvation ever been bestowed? To what tribe or family of man's degenerate offspring beyond her pale, and without her efforts, has such a favour ever been extended? Her God, it is true, has goodness in store for multitudes of men who never saw his spiritual Zion, nor ever heard the voice of mercy in beseeching accents from its lofty summit. In the counsels of his heart there are secret purposes teeming with benignity, and hastening to bring forth, which shall make the wilderness glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose; but the whole system of means, the whole scheme of infallible instruction by which these purposes are to be accomplished, are vested in the church, as the subordinate trustee of the inestimable treasure, not only for her own use, but also for the benefit of others.

To hold this trust, then, "pure and entire," is surely one of her primary duties—a duty to which she is permanently called by the very arousing consideration, that the spirit of error is subtle and insinuating, prone to contaminate the purity of truth, and easily imbibed by the ignorant world; while, in proportion as it is imbibed, the saving efficacy of the truth itself is diminished or destroyed, and the grand end for which it was given in danger of being defeated. So important is this duty for ourselves and for posterity, for the general success of the Christian cause, and the glory of Christ himself, that no evil can be more portentous than a prevalent neglect of it. But just in proportion as the style of Christian education becomes loose and desultory, or flimsy and superficial, this great duty must be neglected, or very inefficiently performed. We cannot be the *conscious* guardians of more than we *know* to be entrusted to us. We cannot be enlightenedly true to our trust, as persons responsible for "the mind of Christ" amidst the mazes of plausible errors, unless we have a clear and consecutive view of the whole scheme of doctrines in which he has chosen to embody his mind. The first without the last is morally impossible; and therefore it must be obvious, without a word of comment, that the immense magnitude of the duty in question, in itself and its consequences, is all available in argument for the mode of Christian training for which we contend. We are not to suppose it by any means enough, in order to be true to our sacred trust, that we love the truths of the Bible, and feel their divinity, and are the subjects of their renovating power in our individual persons. If re-

sponsible for pure transmission as well as for personal use, we must be able to detect the subtleties of error, and to expose its insidious workings to the view of the unwary, else our zeal and honesty, however great, will be very unproductive; for error is often so specious, so near the confines of truth, or so susceptible of plausible connection with the statements of Scripture itself, or with reason's legitimate deductions from Scripture, that it is madness to hope for success in resisting its baneful encroachments, without the possession and exercise of skill and discrimination.

The want of these requisites, even in that measure of them which can easily be reached by the unlearned, may be often detected, in ordinary practice, leading to extravagancies which are all hurtful, although not all in the same degree. At one time an alarm is raised, and attention clamorously summoned to a point where the intelligent perceive there is no danger, except from the impetuosity of ignorant zeal raising the cry of indifference or apostacy, and troubling the church without a cause. At another time, the danger may be imminent, the truth may be gradually disappearing, and error accumulating in its stead, while very few, even of the right-minded, are capable of perceiving the transformation, till time has involved them in a desolating change. These are things, we freely admit, which will occur in less or more under any system of religious training; but this is clearly no reason why we should actually propagate them, nor is it any apology at all for continuing a system confessedly bad, which multiplies the instances of indiscretion, and tends daily to aggravate the worst

of the evils which it involves. Now, let it be remembered, that the remedy for these evils is not piety or fidelity, or zeal for the Lord of hosts, for these may be found where the evils are prevalent; but piety enlightened, and fidelity disciplined, and zeal directed to its proper objects, by a comprehensive and digested view of the whole scheme of Christian doctrine. Nor let it be supposed for a single moment, that to defend the church's heritage of heavenly truth and privilege, and to acquire the extent of knowledge which is necessary for doing it skilfully, is the exclusive province of Christian ministers, while others are happily relieved from the task. Such a supposition is groundless in itself, and most injurious in its practical tendencies. Ministers are charged with the defence of the Gospel by very special injunction, and indifference to its defence on their part is peculiarly sinful; but they are charged with it as the leaders of the people, from whom they are distinguished but not detached; and their most effective mode of defence ever has been, and ever will be, their well-directed perseverance in training the people from the pulpit, or from the press, to that purity and entireness of belief as well as practice, which bind them up along with their ministers into unity of view and operation. It is the scriptural illumination of reason and conscience in the mass of the Christian people, and not the separate efforts of ministers, in maintaining a dry unanimated creed, which alone can meet the tremendous responsibility which the possession of a divine revelation has laid upon the Christian church. Without this, the ministry may be learned and orthodox, furnished for the mightiest

achievements, and inflexibly true to its trust; but for any effective practical purpose, it must at the same time be impotent and helpless, like a leader in the field without his host, unless it feel itself supported by the steady and enlightened concurrence of the united Christian community.

We know there exists a multitude of prejudice against all that can be said in favour of systematic instruction, especially to the people at large. We are told it chills the ardour of feeling in the exercises of piety, or creates a taste for speculations, which encourage hurtful controversy; or induces a habit of looking at the Gospel as an object of contemplative grandeur, instead of receiving it subjectively for inward renovation; or reduces the Christian to an ominous affinity with the student of philosophy and science, detaching his mind from the Bible itself, and giving a latitude to the exercise of reason, which is scarcely compatible with the ascendancy of Revelation. Each of these charges could easily admit of a very sufficient separate reply, did our limits permit us to review them in detail. The discerning reader will not fail to perceive, that whatever force they may possess, is not so much directed against any thing advanced by us, as against those *abuses* of systematic thinking on the part of writers as well as readers, which we are far from wishing to defend. It ought however to be remembered, that a decrease in *the mere ardour of feeling* which characterizes pious exercises, is not by any means a certain sign that the piety itself is deteriorated, but may be the result of its decided improvement—that a thorough knowledge of any subject, whether

religious or common, instead of exciting to hurtful controversy, tends to its suppression—that whatever human perversity may do in the plenitude of its own inventiveness, yet to look at the gospel outwardly, as an object of contemplative grandeur, instead of obstructing, tends to facilitate the beholder's inward reception of it; for he cannot justly estimate its grandeur, without perceiving its adaptation to his own wretched condition; nor can he thus be fascinated, except with that which directly tends to the saving of his soul—and that, while nothing can be more dangerous on the one extreme, than to reduce Christianity to a system of mere rationality, or to turn away its disciple from the Bible, yet the tendency of the discipline for which we contend is the very reverse of this; and few things are more absurd on the other extreme, than that pusillanimous jealousy of reason, which is so eager to lay restraints on the vigorous exertion of its powers in the department of revealed religion. It were good for all the world, believers as well as unbelievers, and for the interests of Christianity itself, that reason, in all her soberness, but with all her legitimate liberty of research, were concentrated on the Bible tenfold more intensely than she ever yet has been; for, to speak of reason as opposed to faith, as is too often done with the very best intentions, is to dishonour the God of both, and senselessly to concede to infidelity the very essence of the point in dispute between the Christian and its abettors.

But as a counterpoise to minor objections, it is important to recollect, that at a very early period of the Christian church, she found herself driven to

systematizing, as the only effective human means of her defence against the insidiousness of error. When heretics employed the language of Scripture, but departed from its genuine import, and thus professed a nominal soundness, when in fact they were grievously unsound, she found herself shut up to the necessity of constructing creeds and confessions in the use of definite human language, as a means of ascertaining the views of her members, and preventing doctrinal apostacy. These manuals by degrees were reduced to method, improved, enlarged, and matured into system, or defended by separate systematic compositions, according as deficiencies were pointed out, or the progress of error called them forth by the subtilty of its new inventions. Such were the circumstances which originated that now degraded thing called Systematic Theology; and although it may have had its defects, or been favourable indirectly to a few improprieties, yet the man who has candidly examined its history, has no need to be put in mind, that its rigid ascertainments, and decisive mode of arguing, have all along been the chief instruments which God has been pleased to bless, for preserving his church from the two fearful evils, of a deadening superstition on the one extreme, and a libertine logic on the other.

We cannot detail the steps of the process by which this instrument was brought into operation, nor yet the circumstances extrinsic to itself, which have led to the occasional abuse of it; for these would require an abbreviated history of theological learning, as well as of the maze of conflicting opinions through which it has had to labour its way. But if

we can say, as we certainly can, without overstraining the truth of the case, that while systematizing is natural to man as an attribute of his reason, the church, in religious matters, was led on to the use of it, and carried forward in it, by a train of adverse occurrences, over which she had no control: that these occurrences were often such as compelled her to meet them in this way, or else be chargeable with a culpable indifference, at once to the dictates of human wisdom, and the obvious leadings of divine Providence: that the result of her entering on this course has been, the establishment of truth, and the overthrow of error, in many of its boasted strongholds; and that a modification of the same kind of procedure is as necessary, and at least as likely to become effective, now as ever it was before: then do we see, in the antiquities of system, that which invests it all at once with the dignity of reason, the sacredness of heavenly sanction, and the practical attestation of a most extensive utility.

It is very easy to muster objections, and feed dislike at a good thing, because it has fallen into disrepute, and requires exertions which are incompatible with the claims of indolence or incapacity; but the thinking part of the Christian community are not to be governed by appearances, nor will they found their practical opinions on mere epithets of vituperation. They will weigh our reasonings in the balance of equity, and to them we look for support. We see, in the training for which we contend, a very powerful defence against the speculative infidelity of the age. For, so far as infidelity seeks to support itself by controverting the contents of revelation, it in-

variably fastens on detached positions, or apparent inconsistencies, or strange and wonderful announcements; and works them up to extravagance, or involves them in perplexity, by the exercise of an ingenuity, which the accessible erudition of the whole subject would show to be utterly perverse. This perverseness is often the result of a most deplorable ignorance on the part of the infidel himself; and if he only knew the subject at which he raves, rather than reasons, a very ordinary sense of shame would be sufficient to restrain him. Or, if those whom he labours to ensnare, were acquainted with the subject, in its general connections and self-expository resources, instead of being staggered, as they often are by his flippancies and plausibilities, they would only pity his infatuation, and wonder at his powers of self-abuse. We see in it the antidote, at once of that *sectarianism*, which mars the unity of the Christian church, and unwarrantably multiplies her separate fellowships; and of that *fanaticism*, which perverts her devotions into visions and raptures, and renders her ridiculous in the eyes of the world: for both the one and the other of these unseemly excesses, originate in a state of mind, which is either the victim of its own fancies, or attaches to minor points, in the scheme of Christian doctrine, an importance which is false or inordinate, but which a better education would effectually prevent. We see in it too, the counteractive of that spurious liberality, which shelters itself among the virtues of our times, and, under the blinding influence of an indiscriminate charity, leads the unwary to dangerous concessions in matters of religious belief. For where this

species of liberality is not a mere pretence, but honestly intended, although mistaken, it arises from ignorance of the points conceded, in themselves or their relative importance; and nothing is needed but adequate instruction, to make it an object of sacred avoidance in every rightly-constituted mind.

These things, however, must be left to the reader's own reflections; enough has been said to introduce the subject to serious Christian consideration, and our limits forbid us to do more at present. We gladly embrace the opportunity of connecting this topic with the following Treatise of BOSTON, which we have long regarded as an excellent specimen of the kind of reading we wish to see prevailing. The "FOUR-FOLD STATE" is a System of Divinity clear and simple, but not superficial; approaching the profound, without being elaborate; and combining brevity with comprehension, in the happiest adaptation to the general capacity. It takes up the subject precisely where every one ought to begin, who wishes to do justice to it or to himself; and it travels through its grand divisions—innocence, sin, grace, and glory, (a plan, by the way, which was happily devised for combining the light of systematic arrangement, with the warmth of practical appeal,)—with a richness of elucidation, and point of practical argument, which must be interesting to every heart that is not hardened into stone against its own eternal well-being. Although a few of its allusions, and minor shades of thought, may not be strictly defensible, it is, as a whole, pre-eminently scriptural, and may be trusted with as much safety as any religious composition which partakes of human infirmity. Its language, in

general, is peculiarly appropriate, displaying the simplicity of the author's times; but so adapted to our times, that the vulgar may read it with high advantage, and the learned with frequent pleasure. We know not, in short, of any one book of its size, and humble pretensions, which exhibits the system of revealed truth in a form so full and satisfactory; and the man who possesses it along with his Bible, as the sum total of his private reading, will find himself well provided for, as to means of personal improvement. We are sure our readers, in general, will judge the present edition a valuable acquisition, not because the book was inaccessible, but because now they can possess a standard copy of it, in such a form and style of printing, as gives it a place among the other Articles, in that "Series of Select Christian Authors," which has intercepted them from the mazes of general religious literature, and furnished already so suitable employment for their hours of devotional leisure.

To speak the praises of the "Fourfold State," however, has now become superfluous. It is one of the few felicitous productions, which, by its own intrinsic claims to acceptance, has wrought its way to a singular pre-eminence in the esteem of the wise and good. To say, that the pious peasantry of Scotland owe to it much of their sound instruction, and many of their hours of religious enjoyment, is only to repeat what every one knows. But they are not the only class to whom it has been blessed. The pious rich as well as the poor, the lettered and the unlettered, the serious inquirer and the experienced Christian, in our own country and in other

lands, have all been attracted to this performance, and agree in pronouncing it an inestimable treasure. Nor is it merely a favourite with man, it has been highly favoured by God himself. Could we hazard a general opinion, from what we know or have heard of its history, that opinion would certainly be, that, at least in our part of the Island, this book has been the instrument of more numerous conversions, and more extensive Christian instruction, than any other human production it is in our power to specify. Those who are familiar with the Author's Memoirs, will very easily remember, that, with one rather singular exception, this Treatise occasioned to him a greater portion of pious solicitude, and was the subject of more fervent prayer, than any other of his numerous writings. Can we be wrong, in tracing a connection between this circumstance, and its long course of distinguished usefulness? Was he awed, almost to oppression, by the magnitude of the subject here presented to us? Was he chastened down to an ingenuous distrust of his own capacity for doing it justice, and brought to a meek and lowly dependence on the special aid of divine grace, before he could venture to send it forth; and has the publication of it in these circumstances been followed with great and continued success? Then, reader, endeavour to peruse it in the same spirit in which it was tendered; for, without this endeavour, it is absolutely certain you will come short of personal advantage. You cannot appreciate any performance unless you get into the spirit of its Author. But the spirit in which this Author coned his pages, and gave them to the public, is obviously the spirit

which God approves. It is the only state of mind which befits our condition as creatures before their Creator, and sinners in the presence of their compassionate Judge; and if you disown it, or cherish its opposite, the book, which has been blessed to thousands, will be no blessing to you; its light will be darkness, its order confusion, and its strains of beseeching tenderness nothing better in your experience than a tissue of unmeaning vocables. But if you give yourself to the perusal, in the spirit of piety and self-distrust, conscious of ignorance and moral incapacity, and placing all your dependence on the teaching of the Holy Ghost, you have every reason to expect, that the answer to the prayers of the pious Author, will be the answer to your prayers; guiding you into the way of truth, and filling you with joy and peace in believing. “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? for all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: *but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*”

D. Y.

PERTH, *March*, 1830.

CONTENTS.

STATE I.

	Page
THE STATE OF INNOCENCE, OR PRIMITIVE INTEGRITY, IN WHICH MAN WAS CREATED, .	47

STATE II.

THE STATE OF NATURE, OR OF ENTIRE DEPRAVATION.

HEAD I.—The Sinfulness of Man's Natural State, .	72
HEAD II.—The Misery of Man's Natural State, .	184
HEAD III.—Man's utter Inability to recover himself, .	222

STATE III.

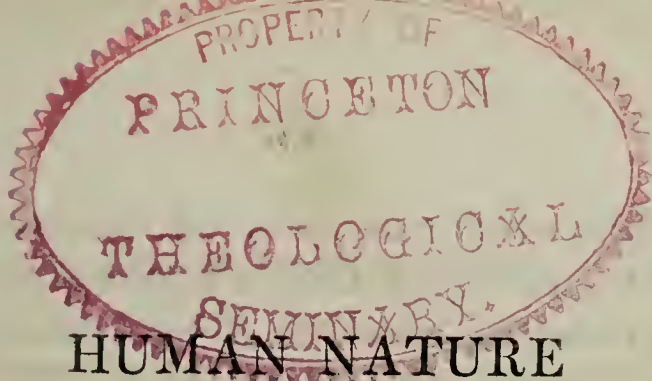
THE STATE OF GRACE, OR BEGUN RECOVERY.

HEAD I.—Regeneration,	242
HEAD II.—The Mystical Union betwixt Christ and Believers,	302

STATE IV.

THE ETERNAL STATE; OR, STATE OF CONSUMMATE
HAPPINESS OR MISERY.

	Page
HEAD I.—Of Death,	382
HEAD II.—The Difference betwixt the Righteous and the Wicked in their Death,	400
HEAD III.—The Resurrection,	438
HEAD IV.—The General Judgment,	461
HEAD V.—The Kingdom of Heaven,	499
HEAD VI.—Hell,	540



IN ITS

FOURFOLD STATE.

STATE I.

THE STATE OF INNOCENCE, OR PRIMITIVE INTEGRITY, IN WHICH MAN WAS CREATED.

ECCLESIASTES vii. 29.

“Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.”

THERE are four things very necessary to be known by all that would see heaven. *First*, What man was in the state of innocence, as God made him. *Secondly*, What he is in the state of corrupt nature, as he hath unmade himself. *Thirdly*, What he must be in a state of grace, as created in Christ Jesus unto good works, if ever he be made a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. And, *Lastly*, What he shall be in his eternal state, as made by the Judge of all, either perfectly happy, or completely miserable, and that for ever. These are weighty points, that touch the vitals of practical god-

liness, from which most men, and even many professors, in these dregs of time, are quite estranged. I design, therefore, under the divine conduct, to open up these things, and apply them.

I begin with “the state of innocence:” that, beholding man polished after the similitude of a palace, the ruins may the more affect us; we may the more prize that matchless Person, whom the Father has appointed the repairer of the breach; and that we may, with fixed resolves, betake ourselves to that way which leadeth to the city that hath immoveable foundations.

In the text we have three things:—

1. The state of innocence wherein man was created: “God hath made man upright.” By man here we are to understand our first parents: the archetypal pair; the fountain from whence all generations have streamed. “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam.” The original word is the same as in our text. In this sense man was made right, (agreeable to the nature of God, whose work is perfect,) without any imperfection, corruption, or principle of corruption in his body or soul. He was made upright, that is, straight with the will and law of God, without any irregularity in his soul. By the set it got in its creation, it directly pointed towards God as its chief end; which straight inclination was represented, as in an emblem, by the erect figure of his body, a figure that no other living creature partakes of. What David was in a gospel sense, that was he in a legal sense: one according to God’s own heart,

altogether righteous, pure, and holy. God made him thus: he did not first make him, and then make him righteous; but in the very making of him, he made him righteous. Original righteousness was concreated with him; so that in the same moment he was a man, he was a righteous man, morally good; with the same breath that God breathed in him a living soul, he breathed in him a righteous soul.

2. Here is man's fallen state: "but they have sought out many inventions." They fell off from their rest in God, and fell upon seeking inventions of their own, to mend their case; and they quite marred it. Their ruin was from their own proper motion; they would not abide as God had made them; but they sought out inventions to deform and undo themselves.

3. Observe here the certainty and importance of these things: "Lo, this only have I found," &c. Believe them, they are the result of a narrow search, and a serious inquiry, performed by the wisest of men. In the two preceding verses, Solomon represents himself as in quest of goodness in the world: but the issue of it was, he could find none; though it was not for want of pains; for he counted one by one to find out the account. "Behold, this have I found, that yet my soul seeketh, but I find not." He could make no satisfying discovery of it, which might stay his inquiry. He found good men very rare, one, as it were, among a thousand; good women more rare, not one good among his thousand wives and concubines. But could that satisfy the grand query, "Where shall wisdom be found?" No, it could not. But, amidst all this uncertainty,

there is one point found out, and fixed: "This have I found." Ye may depend upon it as most certain truth, and be fully satisfied in it: "Lo, this;" fix your eyes upon it, as a matter worthy of most deep and serious regard; to wit, that man's nature is now depraved, but that depravation was not from God, for he "made man upright;" but from themselves, "they have sought out many inventions."

DOCTRINE—*God made Man altogether Righteous.*

This is that state of innocence in which God placed man in the world. It is described in the holy Scriptures, with a running pen, in comparison of the following states, for it was of no continuance, but passed as a flying shadow, by man's abusing the freedom of his own will. I shall,

FIRST, Inquire into the righteousness of this state wherein man was created.

SECONDLY, Lay before you some of the happy concomitants and consequents thereof.

LASTLY, Apply the whole.

Of Man's Original Righteousness.

FIRST, As to the righteousness of this state, consider, that as uncreated righteousness, the righteousness of God, is the supreme rule; so all created righteousness, whether of men or angels, hath respect to a law as its rule, and is a conformity thereto. A creature can no more be morally independent on God, in its actions and powers, than it can be naturally independent on him. A creature, as a creature, must acknowledge the Creator's will as its supreme law;

for as it cannot be without him, so it must not be but for him, and according to his will: yet no law obliges until it be revealed. And hence it follows, that there was a law which man, as a rational creature, was subjected to in his creation; and that this law was revealed to him. “God made man upright.” This presupposes a law to which he was conformed in his creation; as when any thing is made regular, or according to rule, of necessity the rule is presupposed. Whence we may gather, that this law was no other than the eternal, indispensable law of righteousness, observed in all points by the second Adam: opposed by the carnal mind; some notions of which remain yet among the pagans, who, “having not the law, are a law unto themselves.” In a word, this law is the very same which was afterwards summed up in the ten commandments, and promulgated on Mount Sinai to the Israelites, called by us the moral law: and man’s righteousness consisted in conformity to this law. More particularly, there is a two-fold conformity required of man: a conformity of the powers of his soul to the law, which you may call habitual righteousness; and a conformity of all his actions to it, which is actual righteousness. Now God made man habitually righteous; man was to make himself actually righteous: the former was the stock God put into his hand: the latter, the improvement he should have made of it. The righteousness wherein man was created, was the conformity of all the faculties and powers of his soul to the moral law. This is what we call original righteousness, with which man was originally endued. We may take it up in these three things:—

1. Man's understanding was a lamp of light. He had perfect knowledge of the law, and of his duty accordingly: he was made after God's image; and, consequently, could not want knowledge, which is a part thereof. "The new man is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." And, indeed, this was necessary to fit him for universal obedience; seeing no obedience can be according to the law, unless it proceed from a sense of the commandment of God requiring it. It is true, Adam had not the law written upon tables of stone: but it was written upon his mind, the knowledge thereof being concreated with him. God impressed it upon his soul, and made him a law to himself, as the remains of it among the heathens do testify. And seeing man was made to be the mouth of the creation, to glorify God in his works, we have ground to believe he had naturally an exquisite knowledge of the works of God. We have a proof of this in his giving names to the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, and these such as express their nature. "Whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." And the dominion which God gave him over the creatures, soberly to use and dispose of them according to his will, (still in subordination to the will of God,) seems to require no less than a knowledge of their natures. And besides all this, his perfect knowledge of the law proves his knowledge in the management of civil affairs, which, in respect of the law of God, "a good man will guide with discretion."

2. His will lay straight with the will of God.

There was no corruption in his will, no bent nor inclination to evil; for that is sin, properly and truly so called; hence the apostle says, "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." An inclination to evil is really a fountain of sin, and therefore inconsistent with that rectitude and uprightness which the text expressly says he was endued with at his creation. The will of man then was naturally inclined to God and goodness, though mutably. It was disposed, by its original make, to follow the Creator's will, as the shadow does the body; and was not left in equal balance to good and evil; for at that rate he had not been upright, nor habitually conform to the law; which in no moment can allow the creature not to be inclined towards God as his chief end, more than it can allow man to be a god to himself. The law was impressed upon Adam's soul: now this, according to the new covenant, by which the image of God is repaired, consists in two things: 1. Putting the law into the mind, denoting the knowledge of it. 2. Writing it in the heart, denoting inclinations in the will, answerable to the commands of the law. So that, as the will, when we consider it as renewed by grace, is by that grace natively inclined to the same holiness in all its parts which the law requires; so was the will of man (when we consider him as God made him at first) endued with natural inclinations to every thing commanded by the law. For if the regenerate are partakers of the divine nature, as undoubtedly they are, for so says the Scripture, 2 Pet. i. 4. and if this divine nature can import no less than inclinations of the

heart to holiness ; then surely Adam's will could not want this inclination ; for in him the image of God was perfect. It is true, it is said, " That the Gentiles show the work of the law written in their hearts ;" but this denotes only their knowledge of that law, such as it is ; but the apostle to the Hebrews, in the text cited, takes the word *heart* in another sense, distinguishing it plainly from the mind. And it must be granted, that when God promiseth in the new covenant, to write his law in the hearts of his people, it imports quite another thing than what heathens have ; for though they have notions of it in their minds, yet their hearts go another way ; their will has got a set and a bias quite contrary to that law ; and therefore the expression suitable to the present purpose must needs import, besides these notions of the mind, inclinations of the will going along therewith ; which inclinations, though mixed with corruption in the regenerate, were pure and unmixed in upright Adam. In a word, as Adam knew his Master's pleasure in the matter of duty, so his will stood inclined to what he knew.

3. His affections were orderly, pure, and holy, which is a necessary part of that uprightness wherein man was created. The apostle has this petition : " The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God ;" that is, the Lord straighten your hearts, or make them lie straight to the love of God : and our text tells us man was thus made straight. " The new man is created in righteousness and true holiness." Now this holiness, as it is distinguished from righteousness, may import the purity and orderliness of the affections. And thus the apostle will have men

to “pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;” because, as troubled water is unfit to receive the image of the sun, so the heart, filled with impure and disorderly affections, is not fit for divine communications. Man’s sensitive appetite was indeed naturally carried out towards objects grateful to the senses; for seeing man was made up of body and soul, and God made man to glorify and enjoy him, and for this end to use his good creatures in subordination to himself, it is plain that man was naturally inclined both to spiritual and sensible good; yet to spiritual good, the chief good, as his ultimate end. And therefore his sensitive motions and inclinations were subordinate to his reason and will, which lay straight with the will of God, and were not in the least contrary to it. Otherwise he should have been made up of contradictions: his soul being naturally inclined to God as the chief end in the superior part thereof; and the same soul inclined to the creature as the chief end in the inferior part thereof, which is impossible; for man, at the same instant, cannot have two chief ends. Man’s affections then, in his primitive state, were pure from all defilement, free from all disorder and distemper; because, in all their motions, they were duly subjected to his clear reason and his holy will. He had also an executive power answerable to his will; a power to do the good which he knew should be done, and which he was inclined to do, even to fulfil the whole law of God. If it had not been so, God would not have required of him perfect obedience; for to say that the Lord gathereth where he hath not strewed, is but the blasphemy of a wicked heart against a good and bountiful God.

From what has been said, it may be gathered that the original righteousness explained was universal and natural, yet mutable.

1. It was universal, both with respect to the subject of it, the whole man—and the object of it, the whole law. Universal, I say, with respect to the subject of it; for this righteousness was diffused through the whole man: it was a blessed leaven, that leavened the whole lump. (There was not one wrong pin in the tabernacle of human nature when God set it up, however shattered it is now.) Man was then holy in soul, body, and spirit: while the soul remained untainted, its lodging was kept pure and undefiled; the members of the body were consecrated vessels, and instruments of righteousness. A combat betwixt flesh and spirit, reason and appetite; nay, the least inclination to sin, or lust of the flesh, in the inferior part of the soul, was utterly inconsistent with this uprightness; and has been invented to veil the corruption of man's nature, and to obscure the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It looks very like the language of fallen Adam, laying his own sin at his Maker's door: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." But as this righteousness was universal in respect of the subject, because it spread through the whole man; so also it was universal in respect of the object, the holy law. There was nothing in the law but what was agreeable to his reason and will, as God made him, though sin hath now set him at variance with it.

2. As it was universal, so it was natural to him, and not supernatural to him in that state. Not that

it was essential to man, as man; for then he could not have lost it, without the loss of his very being; but it was co-natural to him. He was created with it; and it was necessary to the perfection of man, as he came out of the hand of God; necessary to constitute him in a state of integrity. Yet,

3. It was mutable; it was a righteousness that might be lost, as is manifested by the doleful event. His will was not absolutely indifferent to good or evil; God set it towards good only: yet he did not so fix and confirm its inclinations that it could not alter. No, it was moveable to evil; and that only by man himself, God having given him a sufficient power to stand in this integrity, if he had pleased. Let no man quarrel God's work in this; for if Adam had been unchangeably righteous, he behooved to have been so either by nature or by free gift: by nature he could not be so, for that is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature; if by free gift, then no wrong was done him, in withholding what he could not crave. Confirmation in a righteous state is a reward of grace, given upon continuing righteous through the state of trial. It is given to the saints upon account of the merits of Christ, who was obedient even to the death. And herein believers have the advantage of Adam, that they can never totally nor finally fall away from grace.

Thus was man made originally righteous, being "created in God's own image," which consists in the positive qualities of "knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." All that God made was very good, according to their several natures. And so was man morally good, being made after the image of

him who is good and upright. Without this, he could not have answered the great end of his creation, which was to know, love, and serve his God, according to his will. Nay, he could not be created otherwise; for he behooved either to be conformed to the law, in his powers, principles, and inclinations, or not: if he was, then he was righteous; and if not, he was a sinner, which is absurd and horrible to imagine.

Of Man's Original Happiness.

SECONDLY, I shall lay before you some of those things which did accompany or flow from the righteousness of man's primitive state. Happiness is the result of holiness; and as it was a holy, so it was a happy state.

1. Man was then a very glorious creature. We have reason to suppose, that as Moses' face shone when he came down from the mount, so man had a very lightsome and pleasant countenance, and beautiful body, while as yet there was no darkness of sin in him at all. But seeing God himself is glorious in holiness, surely that spiritual comeliness which the Lord put upon man at his creation, made him a very glorious creature. O how did light shine in his holy conversation, to the glory of the Creator! while every action was but the darting forth of a ray and beam of that glorious, unmixed light, which God had set up in his soul; while that lamp of love, lighted from heaven, continued burning in his heart, as in the holy place; and the law of the Lord, put in his inward parts by the finger of God, was kept by him there, as in the most holy. There was no impurity

to be seen without ; no inclination after any unclean thing ; the tongue spoke nothing but the language of heaven ; and, in a word, the King's son was all glorious within, and his clothing of wrought gold.

2. He was the favourite of heaven. He shone brightly in the image of God, who cannot but love his own image wherever it appears. While he was alone in the world he was not alone, for God was with him. His communion and fellowship was with his Creator, and that immediately : for as yet there was nothing to turn away the face of God from the work of his own hands, seeing sin had not entered, which alone could make the breach.

By the favour of God he has advanced to be confederate with heaven in the first covenant, called, *The Covenant of Works*. God reduced the law which he gave in his creation into the form of a covenant, whereof perfect obedience was the condition : life was the thing promised, and death the penalty. As for the condition, one great branch of the natural law was, that men believe whatsoever God shall reveal, and do whatsoever he shall command. Accordingly, God making this covenant with man, extended his duty to the not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil ; and the law thus extended was the rule of man's covenant obedience. How easy were these terms to him, who had the natural law written on his heart ; and that inclining him to obey this positive law, revealed to him by an audible voice, the matter whereof was so very easy ! And indeed it was highly reasonable that the rule and matter of his covenant obedience should be thus extended ; that

which was added being a thing in itself indifferent, where his obedience was to turn upon the precise point of the will of God, the plainest evidence of true obedience, and it being in an external thing, wherein his obedience or disobedience would be most clear and conspicuous.

Now, upon this condition God promised him life : the continuance of natural life, in the union of soul and body ; and of spiritual life, in the favour of his Creator. This promise of life was included in the threatening of death, mentioned Gen. ii. 17. For while God says, “ In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die ; ” it is in effect, “ If thou do not eat of it, thou shalt surely live. ” And this was sacramentally confirmed by another tree in the garden, called, therefore, *the tree of life*, which he was debarred from when he had sinned : “ Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever. Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden. ” Yet it is not to be thought that man’s life and death did hang only on this matter of the forbidden fruit, but on the whole law ; for so says the apostle, “ It is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. ” That of the forbidden fruit was a revealed part of Adam’s religion, and so behooved expressly to be laid before him ; but as to the natural law, he naturally knew death to be the reward of disobedience : for the very heathens were not ignorant of this, “ knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death. ” And, moreover, the promise included in the threatening secured Adam’s

life, according to the covenant, as long as he obeyed the natural law, with the addition of that positive command: so that he needed nothing to be expressed to him in the covenant but what concerned the eating of the forbidden fruit. That eternal life in heaven was promised in this covenant, is plain from this; that the threatening was of eternal death in hell; to which, when man had made himself liable, Christ was promised, by his death to purchase eternal life: and Christ himself expounds the promise of the covenant of works of eternal life, while he proposeth the condition of that covenant to a proud young man, who, though he had not Adam's stock, yet would needs enter into life in the way of working, as Adam was to have done under this covenant: "If thou wilt enter into life, (namely, eternal life, by doing,) keep the commandments."

The penalty was death. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." The death threatened was such as the life promised was; and that most justly, namely, *temporal*, *spiritual*, and *eternal death*. The event is a commentary on this: for that very day he did eat thereof, he was a dead man in law; but the execution was stopped, because of his posterity then in his loins; and another covenant was prepared: however, that day his body got its death's-wound, and became mortal. Death also seized his soul: he lost his original righteousness and the favour of God;—witness the fears of conscience, which made him hide himself from God. And he became liable to eternal death, which would have actually followed of course, if a Mediator had not been provided, who found him bound with the

cords of death, as a malefactor ready to be led to execution.

And seemeth it a small thing unto you that earth was thus confederate with heaven? This could have been done to none but him, whom the King of heaven delighted to honour. It was an act of grace worthy of the gracious God whose favourite he was; for there was grace and free favour in the first covenant, though “the exceeding riches of grace” was reserved for the second. It was certainly an act of grace, favour, and admirable condescension in God, to enter into such a covenant with his own creature. Man was not at his own, but at God’s disposal. Nor had he any thing to work with, but what he had received from God. There was no proportion betwixt the work and the promised reward. Before that covenant, man was bound to perfect obedience, in virtue of his natural dependence on God; and death was naturally the wages of sin; which the justice of God could and would have required, though there had never been any covenant betwixt God and man: but God was free; man could never have required eternal life as the reward of his work, if there had not been such a covenant. God was free to have disposed of his creature as he saw meet: and if he had stood in his integrity as long as the world should stand, and there had been no covenant promising eternal life to him upon his obedience, God might have withdrawn his supporting hand at last, and so made him sink back into the womb of nothing, whence almighty power had drawn him forth. And what wrong could there have been in this, while God would have taken back what he freely gave? but now

the covenant being made, God becomes debtor to his own faithfulness. If man will work, he may crave the reward on the ground of the covenant. Well might the angels then, upon his being raised to this dignity, have given him this salutation, "Hail! thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee."

3. God made him lord of the world, prince of the inferior creatures, universal lord and emperor of the whole earth. His Creator gave him dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, over all the earth, yea, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth: he "put all things under his feet." He gave him a power soberly to use and dispose of the creatures in the earth, sea, and air. Thus man was God's deputy-governor in the lower world; and this his dominion was an image of God's sovereignty. This was common to the man and the woman; but the man had one thing peculiar to him, namely, that he had dominion over the woman also. Behold how the creatures came unto him, to own their subjection, and to do him homage as their lord; and quietly stood before him, till he put names on them as his own. Man's face struck an awe upon them; the stoutest creatures stood astonished, tamely and quietly owning him as their lord and ruler. Thus was man "crowned with glory and honour." The Lord dealt most liberally and bountifully with him, "put all things under his feet;" only he kept one thing, one tree in the garden, out of his hands, even the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

But, you may say, *And did he grudge him this?* I answer, Nay; but when he had made him thus holy and happy, he graciously gave him this restric-

tion, which was in its own nature a prop and stay to keep him from falling. And this I say upon these three grounds:—1. As it was most proper for the honour of God, who had made man lord of the lower world, to assert his sovereign dominion over all, by some particular visible sign; so it was most proper for man's safety. Man being set down in a beautiful paradise, it was an act of infinite wisdom, and of grace too, to keep him from one single tree, as a visible testimony that he must hold all of his Creator, as his great Landlord; that so while he saw himself lord of the creatures, he might not forget that he was still God's subject. 2. This was a memorial of his mutable state given to him from heaven, for his greater caution. For man was created with a free will to good, which the *tree of life* was an evidence of: but his will was also free to evil, and the *forbidden tree* was to him a memorial thereof. It was in a manner a continual watchword to him against evil; a beacon set up before him, to bid him beware of dashing himself to pieces on the rock of sin. 3. God made man upright, directed towards God as the chief end. God made the beasts looking down towards the earth, to show that their satisfaction might be brought from thence; and, accordingly, it does afford them what is suited to their appetite: but the erect figure of man's body, which looketh upward, showed him that his happiness lay above him, in God; and that he was to expect it from heaven, and not from earth. Now this fair tree, of which he was forbidden to eat, taught him the same lesson; that his happiness lay not in enjoyment of the creatures, for there was a want even in paradise:

so that the forbidden tree was, in effect, the hand of all the creatures, pointing man away from themselves to God for happiness. It was a sign of emptiness hung before the door of the creation, with that inscription, *This is not your rest.*

4. As he had a perfect tranquillity within his own breast, so he had a perfect calm without. His heart had nothing to reproach him with; conscience then had nothing to do, but to direct, approve, and feast him; and without there was nothing to annoy him. The happy pair lived in perfect amity; and though their knowledge was vast, true, and clear, they knew no shame. Though they were naked, there were no blushes in their faces; for sin, the seed of shame, was not yet sown, and their beautiful bodies had no need of clothes, which were originally the badges of our shame. They were liable to no diseases nor pains: and, though they were not to live idle, yet toil, weariness, and sweat of the brows, were not known in this state.

5. Man had a life of pure delight and pleasure in this state. Rivers of pure pleasures ran through it. The earth, with the product thereof, was now in its glory; nothing had yet come in to mar the beauty of the creatures. God set him down, not in a common place of the earth, but in Eden, a place eminent for pleasantness, as the name of it imports; nay, not only in Eden, but in the *garden of Eden*; the most pleasant spot of that pleasant place: a garden planted by God himself, to be the mansion-house of this his favourite. As, when God made the other living creatures, he said, "Let the water bring forth the moving creature," and "Let the earth bring forth

the living creature." But when man was to be made, he said, "Let us make man." So when the rest of the earth was to be furnished with herbs and trees, God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, and the fruit-tree." But of paradise it is said, "God planted it," which cannot but denote a singular excellency in that garden, beyond all other parts of the then beautiful earth. There he wanted neither for necessity nor delight; for there was "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food." He knew not those delights which luxury has invented for the gratifying of lusts; but his delights were such as came out of the hand of God; without passing through sinful hands, which readily leave marks of impurity on what they touch. So his delights were pure, his pleasures refined. And yet may "I show you a more excellent way, Wisdom had entered into his heart:" surely, then, knowledge was pleasant unto his soul. What delight do some find in their discoveries of the works of nature, by those scraps of knowledge they have gathered! but how much more exquisite pleasure had Adam, while his piercing eyes read the book of God's works, which God laid before him, to the end he might glorify him in them; and therefore had surely fitted him for the work! But, above all, his knowledge of God, and that as his God, and the communion he had with him, could not but afford him the most refined and exquisite pleasure in the innermost recesses of his heart. Great is that delight which the saints find in those views of the glory of God, that their souls are sometimes let into; while they are compassed about with many infirmities: but much more may well be allowed to sinless Adam.

Lastly, He was immortal. He would never have died if he had not sinned; it was in case of sin that death was threatened, which shows it to be the consequence of sin, and not of the sinless human nature. The perfect constitution of his body, which came out of God's hand very good; and the righteousness and holiness of his soul, removed all inward causes of death; nothing being prepared for the grave's devouring mouth, but the vile body, and those who have sinned. And God's special care of his innocent creature secured him against outward violence. The apostle's testimony is express, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Behold the door by which death came in! Satan wrought with his lies till he got it opened, and so death entered; and therefore is he said "to have been a murderer from the beginning."

Thus have I shown you the holiness and happiness of man in this state. If any shall say, What is all this to us, who never tasted of that holy and happy state? They must know, it nearly concerns us, in so far as Adam was the root of all mankind, our common head and representative, who received from God our inheritance, to keep it for himself and his children, and to convey it to them. He put a blessing in the root, to have been, if rightly managed, diffused into all the branches. According to our text, making Adam upright, he made man upright: and all mankind had that uprightness in him: for, "if the root be holy, so are the branches." Had Adam stood, none would have quarrelled with the representation.

The Doctrine of the State of Innocence applied.

USE I.—For information. This shows us, 1. That not God, but man himself, was the cause of his ruin. God made him upright, his Creator set him up, but he threw himself down. Was the Lord's directing and inclining him to good the reason of his woful choice? or did heaven deal so sparingly with him, that his pressing wants sent him to hell to seek supply? Nay, man was and is the cause of his own ruin. 2. God may most justly require of men perfect obedience to his law, and condemn them for their not obeying it perfectly, though now they have no ability to keep it. In so doing, he gathers but where he has strewed. He gave man ability to keep the whole law; man has lost it by his own fault; but his sin could never take away that right which God hath to exact perfect obedience from his creature, and to punish in case of disobedience. 3. Behold here the infinite obligation we lie under to Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who with his own precious blood has bought our inheritance, and freely makes offer of it again to us; and that with the advantage of everlasting security, that it can never be altogether lost any more. Free grace will fix those whom free will shook down into a gulf of misery.

USE II.—This conveys a reproof to three sorts of persons. 1. To those who hate religion in the power of it, wherever it appears, and can take pleasure in nothing but in the world and their lusts. Surely those men are far from righteousness: they are haters of God, for they are haters of his image. Upright Adam in paradise would have been a great eye-sore

to all such persons ; as he was to the serpent, whose seed they prove themselves to be by their malignity.

2. It reproves those who put religion to shame, and those who are ashamed of religion before a graceless world. There is a generation, who make so bold with the God who made them, and can in a moment crush them, that they ridicule piety, and make a mock of seriousness. “ Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue?” Is it not against God himself, whose image, in some measure repaired on some of his creatures, makes them fools in your eyes? “ But be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.” Holiness was the glory God put on man when he made him; but now the sons of men turn that glory into shame, because they themselves glory in their shame. There are others that secretly approve of religion, and in religious company will profess it, who at other times, to be neighbour-like, are ashamed to own it. So weak are they, that they are blown over with the wind of the wicked’s mouth. A broad laugh, an impious jest, a silly gibe, out of a profane mouth, is to many an unanswerable argument against religion and seriousness; for in the cause of religion they are “ as silly doves without heart.” O that such would consider that weighty word, “ Who-soever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels !”

3. It reproves the proud self-conceited professor, who admires himself in a garment he hath patched together of rags. There are many who,

when once they have gathered some scraps of knowledge of religion, and have attained to some reformation of life, do swell with conceit of themselves; a sad sign that the effects of the fall lie so heavy upon them, that they have not as yet come to themselves. But those men are such a spectacle of commiseration, as one would be that had set his palace on fire, and were glorying in a cottage he had built for himself out of the rubbish, though so very weak that it could not stand against a storm.

USE III.—Of lamentation. Here was a stately building; man, carved like a fair palace, but now lying in ashes. Let us stand and look on the ruins, and drop a tear. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation. Could we choose but to weep, if we saw our country ruined, and turned by the enemy into a wilderness? if we saw our houses on fire, and our households perishing in the flames? But all this comes far short of the dismal sight—"man fallen as a star from heaven!" Ah! may not we now say, "O that we were as in months past," when there was no stain in our nature, no cloud on our minds, no pollution in our hearts! Where is our primitive glory now? Once no darkness in the mind, no rebellion in the will, no disorder in the affections. But ah! "how is the faithful city become a harlot? righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. Our silver is become dross, our wine mixed with water." That heart which was once the temple of God, is now turned into a den of thieves. Let our name be Ichabod, for the glory is departed. Happy wast thou, O man! who was like unto thee? No pain nor sickness could affect thee, no death could ap-

proach thee, no sigh was heard from thee, till these bitter fruits were plucked off the forbidden tree. Heaven shone upon thee, and earth smiled: thou wast the companion of angels, and the envy of devils. But how low is he now laid, who was created for dominion, and made lord of the world ! “ The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us that we have sinned.” The creatures that waited to do him service, are now, since the fall, set in battle array against him; and the least of them, having commission, proves too hard for him. Alas ! how are we fallen ! how are we plunged into a gulf of misery ! The sun has gone down on us, death has come in at our windows; our enemies have put out our two eyes, and sport themselves with our miseries. Let us then lie down in our shame, and let our confusion cover us. Nevertheless, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Come then, O sinner ! look to Jesus Christ, the second Adam. Quit the first Adam and his covenant; come over to the Mediator and Surety of the new and better covenant: and let your hearts say, “ Be thou our ruler, and let this breach be under thy hand:” and let your “ eye trickle down, and cease not, without any intermission, till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.”

STATE II.

THE STATE OF NATURE, OR OF ENTIRE DEPRAVATION.

HEAD I.

THE SINFULNESS OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE.

GENESIS vi. 5.

“ And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

WE have seen what man was, as God made him, a lovely and happy creature: let us view him now, as he hath unmade himself, and we shall see him a sinful and miserable creature. This is the sad state we were brought into by the fall; a state as dark and doleful as the former was glorious: and this we commonly call the state of nature, or man's natural state, according to the apostle—“ And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” And herein two things are to be considered: 1st, The sinfulness; 2dly, The misery of this state, in which all the unregenerate do live. I begin with the sinfulness of man's natural state, whereof the text gives us a full, though short account: “ And God saw that the wickedness of man was great,” &c.

The scope and design of these words are, to clear God's justice in bringing the flood on the old world. There are two particular causes taken notice of in the preceding verses:—1. Mixed marriages, ver. 2. The sons of God, the posterity of Seth and Enos, professors of the true religion, married with the daughters of men, the profane, cursed race of Cain. They did not carry the matter before the Lord, that he might choose for them. But without any respect to the will of God, they chose, not according to the rules of their faith, but of their fancy: they saw that they were fair; and their marriage with them occasioned their divorce from God. This was one of the causes of the deluge, which swept away the old world. Would to God that all professors in our day could plead not guilty! But though that sin brought on the deluge, yet the deluge hath not swept away that sin, which, as of old, so in our day, may justly be looked upon as one of the causes of the decay of religion. It was an ordinary thing among the pagans to change their gods, as they changed their condition into a married lot. And many sad instances the Christian world affords of the same; as if people were of Pharaoh's opinion, that religion is only for those who have no other care upon their heads. 2. Great oppression, ver. 4. "There were giants in the earth in those days," men of great stature, great strength, and monstrous wickedness, "filling the earth with violence," ver. 11. Thus much for the connection, and what particular crimes that generation was guilty of. But every person that was swept away by the flood could not be guilty of these things; and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Therefore, in my text there is

a general indictment drawn up against them all—
 “The wickedness of man was great in the earth,”
 &c. And this is well instructed; for God saw it.
 Two things are laid to their charge here:—

1. Corruption of life, wickedness, great wickedness. I understand this of the wickedness of their lives; for it is plainly distinguished from the wickedness of their hearts. The sins of their outward conversation were great in the nature of them, and greatly aggravated by their attendant circumstances; and this not only among those of the race of cursed Cain, but those of holy Seth: “The wickedness of man was great.” And then it is added, “in the earth,” 1. To vindicate God’s severity; in that he not only cut off sinners, but defaced the beauty of the earth, and swept off the brute creatures from it by the deluge; that as men had set the marks of their impiety, God might set the marks of his indignation, on the earth. 2. To show the heinousness of their sin, in making the earth, which God had so adorned for the use of man, a sink of sin, and a stage whereon to act their wickedness, in defiance of heaven. God saw this corruption of life; he not only knew it, and took notice of it, but he made them to know that he did take notice of it, and that he had not forsaken the earth, though they had forsaken heaven.

2. Corruption of nature: “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” All their wicked practices are here traced to the fountain: a corrupt heart was the source of all. The soul, which was made upright in all its faculties, is now wholly disordered. The heart, that was made

according to God's own heart, is now the reverse of it: a forge of evil imaginations, a sink of inordinate affections, and a store-house of all impiety. Behold the heart of the natural man, as it is opened in our text. The mind is defiled; the thoughts of the heart are evil; the will and affections are defiled; the imagination of the thoughts of the heart, (that is, whatsoever the heart frameth within itself by thinking, such as judgment, choice, purposes, devices, desires, every inward motion,) or rather the frame of the thoughts of the heart, (namely, the frame, make, or mould of these,) is evil. Yea, and every imagination, every frame of his thoughts, is so. The heart is ever framing something, but never one right thing; the frame of thoughts in the heart of man is exceeding various, yet are they never cast into a right frame. But is there not at least a mixture of good in them? No, they are only evil; there is nothing in them truly good and acceptable to God; nor can any thing be so, where not the Spirit of God, but "the prince of the power of the air worketh." Whatever changes may be found in them are only from evil to evil; for the imagination of the heart, or frame of thoughts in natural men, is evil continually, or every day. From the first day to the last day in this state, they are in midnight darkness; there is not a glimmering of the light of holiness in them; not one holy thought can ever be produced by the unholy heart. O what a vile heart is this! O what a corrupt nature is this! The tree that always brings forth fruit, but never good fruit, whatever soil it be set in, whatever pains be taken with it, must naturally be an evil tree; and what can that heart

be, whereof every imagination, every set of thoughts, is only evil, and that continually? Surely that corruption is ingrained in our hearts, interwoven with our very natures, has sunk into the marrow of our souls, and will never be cured but by a miracle of grace.

Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, ‘What is that to us? Let that generation of whom the text speaks see to that.’ For the Lord has left the case of that generation on record, to be a looking-glass to all after generations; wherein they may see their own corruption of heart, and what their lives would be too, if he restrained them not: for “as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.” Adam’s fall has framed all men’s hearts alike in this matter. Hence the apostle, Rom. iii. 10—18. proves the corruption of the nature, hearts, and lives of all men, from what the Psalmist says of the wicked in his day, Psalm xiv. 1, 2, 3. v. 9. cxl. 3. x. 7. xxxvi. 1. and from what Jeremiah saith of the wicked in his day, Jer. ix. 3. and from what Isaiah says of those that lived in his time, Isa. lvii. 7, 8. and concludes with that, “Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” Had the history of the deluge been transmitted to us, without the reason thereof in the text, we might thence have gathered the corruption and total depravation of man’s nature: for what other quarrel could a holy and just God have with the infants that were destroyed by the flood, seeing they had no actual sin? If we saw a wise man, who,

having made a curious piece of work, and heartily approved of it when he gave it out of his hand, as fit for the use it was designed for, rise up in wrath and break it all in pieces, when he looked on it afterwards; would we not thence conclude that the frame of it had been quite marred since made, and that it does not serve for the use it was at first designed? How much more, when we see the holy and wise God destroying the work of his own hands, once solemnly pronounced by him very good, may we conclude that the original frame thereof is utterly marred, that it cannot be mended, but it must needs be new made, or lost altogether? “And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man,” or blot him out, as a man doth a sentence out of a book, that cannot be corrected, but must needs be wholly new framed. But did the deluge carry off this corruption of man’s nature? Did it mend the matter? No, it did not. God, in his holy providence, “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the new world may become guilty before God,” as well as the old, permits that corruption of nature to break out in Noah, the father of the new world, after the deluge was over. Behold him as another Adam, sinning in the fruit of a tree, Gen. ix. 20, 21. He planted a vineyard, and he drank of the wine, and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent. More than that, God gives the same reason against a new deluge, which he gives in our text for bringing that on the old world: “I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Where-

by it is intimated, that there is no mending of the matter by this means; and that, if he would always take the same course with men that he had done, he would be always sending deluges on the earth, seeing the corruption of man's nature remains still. For though the flood could not carry off the corruption of nature, yet it pointed at the way how it is to be done—namely, that men must be born of water and of the Spirit, raised from spiritual death in sin, by the grace of Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood; out of which a new world of saints arise in regeneration, even as the new world of sinners out of the waters, where they had long lain buried (as it were) in the ark. This we learn from 1 Peter iii. 20, 21. where the apostle, speaking of Noah's ark, saith, “wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.” Now the waters of the deluge being a like figure to baptism, it plainly follows that they signified, as baptism doth, “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” To conclude then, those waters, though now dried up, may serve us still for a looking-glass, in which we may see the total corruption of our nature, and the necessity of regeneration.

From the text, thus explained, ariseth this weighty point of DOCTRINE, which he that runs may read, namely, *Man's Nature is now wholly corrupted.* Now is there a sad alteration in the nature of man! where at first there was nothing evil, now there is nothing good. In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall,
FIRST, Confirm it.

SECONDLY, Represent this corruption of nature in its several parts.

THIRDLY, Show you how man's nature comes to be thus corrupted.

LASTLY, Make application.

That Man's Nature is corrupted.

FIRST, I am to confirm the doctrine of the corruption of nature; to hold the glass to your eyes, wherein you may see your sinful nature; which, though God takes particular notice of it, many do quite overlook. And here we shall consult, I. God's word. II. Man's experience and observation.

I. For Scripture proof, let us consider,

1. How the Scripture takes particular notice of fallen Adam's communicating his image to his posterity: Gen. v. "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth." Compare with this, verse 1. of that chapter, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him." Behold here, how the image after which man was made, and the image after which he is begotten, are opposed. Man was made in the likeness of God; that is, the holy and righteous God made a holy and righteous creature: but fallen Adam begat a son, not in the likeness of God, but in his own likeness; that is, corrupt sinful Adam begat a corrupt sinful son. For as the image of God bore righteousness and immortality in it, so this image of fallen Adam bore corruption and death in it, 1 Cor. xv. 49, 50. compare verse 22. Móses, in that fifth chapter of Genesis, being to give us the first bill of mortality that ever was in the world, ushers it in with this, that dying Adam begat mortals. Having sinned, he became mortal, according to the threatening; and

so he begat a son, in his own likeness, sinful, and therefore mortal: thus sin and death passed on all. Doubtless, he begat Cain in his own likeness, as well as Seth. But it is not recorded of Cain, to whom it might have been thought peculiar, because of his monstrous wickedness; and besides, all his posterity were drowned in the flood; but it is recorded of Seth, because he was the father of the holy seed; and from him all mankind since the flood have descended, and fallen Adam's own likeness with them.

2. It appears from that scripture, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Our first parents were unclean, how then can we be clean? How could our immediate parents be clean? Or, how shall our children be so? The uncleanness here aimed at is a sinful uncleanness; for it is such as makes man's days full of trouble; and it is natural, being derived from unclean parents: "man is born of a woman." "And how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" The omnipotent God, whose power is not here challenged, could bring a clean thing out of an unclean; and did so, in the case of the man Christ; but no other can. Every person that is born according to the course of nature, is born unclean. If the root be corrupt, so must the branches. Neither is the matter mended, though the parents be sanctified ones; for they are but holy in part, and that by grace, not by nature.

3. Consider the confession of the Psalmist David, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Here he ascends from his actual sin to the fountain of it, namely, corrupt nature. He was a man according to God's own

heart; but from the beginning it was not so with him. Hence the corruption of nature is called the old man; being as old as ourselves, older than grace, even in those that are sanctified from the womb.

4. Hear our Lord's determination of the point: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Behold the universal corruption of mankind,—all are flesh. Not that all are frail, though that is a sad truth too; yea, and our natural frailty is an evidence of our natural corruption; but that is not the sense of this text; but here is the meaning of it, all are corrupt and sinful, and that naturally; hence our Lord argues here, that because they are flesh, therefore they must be born again, or else they "cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And as the corruption of our nature evidenceth the absolute necessity of regeneration, so the absolute necessity of regeneration plainly proves the corruption of our nature; for why should a man need a second birth, if his nature were not quite marred in the first birth? Infants must be born again, for that is an except (John iii. 3.) which admits of no exception. And, therefore, they were circumcised under the Old Testament; as having "the body of the sins of the flesh to put off." And now, by the appointment of Jesus Christ, they are to be baptised; which says they are unclean, and that there is no salvation for them, but by the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

5. Man certainly is sunk very low now, in comparison of what he once was: God made him but a "little lower than the angels;" but now we find him likened to the beasts that perish. He hearkened to

a brute; and is now become like one of them. Like Nebuchadnezzar, his portion is with the beasts, "minding only earthly things." Nay, brutes, in some sort, have the advantage of the natural man, who is sunk a degree below them. He is more stupid than the ox or ass, Isa. i. 3. I find him sent to school, to learn of the ant, which, having no guide or leader to go before her, no overseer to compel or stir her up to work, yet "provideth her meat in the summer and harvest;" while the natural man hath all these, and yet exposeth himself to eternal starving. Nay, more than all this, the Scripture holds out the natural man not only as wanting the good qualities of those creatures, but as a compound of the evil qualities of the worst of creatures. Truth itself calls them "serpents, a generation of vipers;" yea more, even "children of the devil." Surely then, man's nature is miserably corrupted.

Lastly, "We are by nature the children of wrath." We are worthy of, and liable to the wrath of God; and this by nature: and therefore, doubtless, we are by nature sinful creatures. We are condemned before we have done good or evil; under the curse, before we know what it is. "But will a lion roar in the forest while he hath no prey?" that is, will the holy and just God roar in his wrath against man, if he be not, by his sin, made a prey for wrath? No, he will not, he cannot. Let us conclude, then, that, according to the word of God, man's nature is a corrupt nature.

II. If we consult experience, and observe the case of the world in those things that are obvious to any person who will not shut his eyes against clear light,

we shall quickly perceive such fruits as discover this root of bitterness. I shall propose a few things that may serve to convince us in this point.

1. Who sees not a flood of miseries overflowing the world? Every one at home and abroad, in city and country, in palaces and cottages, is groaning under something or other ungrateful to him. Some are oppressed with poverty, some chastened with sickness and pain, some are lamenting their losses; none wants a cross of one sort or another. No man's condition is so soft, but there is some thorn of uneasiness in it. And at length death, the wages of sin, comes after these its harbingers, and sweeps all away.

Now, what but sin has opened the sluice? There is not a complaint nor sigh heard in the world, nor a tear that falls from our eye, but it is an evidence that man is fallen as a star from heaven; for "God distributeth sorrows in his anger." This is a plain proof of the corruption of nature, forasmuch as those that have not yet actually sinned have their share of these sorrows; yea, and draw their first breath in the world weeping, as if they knew this world, at first sight, to be a *Bochim*, the place of weepers. There are graves of the smallest as well as of the largest size, in the church-yard.

2. Observe how early this corruption of nature begins to appear in young ones: Solomon observes, that "even a child is known by his doings." It may soon be discerned what way the bias of the heart lies. Do not the children of fallen Adam, before they can go alone, follow their father's footsteps? What a vast deal of little pride, ambition, curiosity,

vanity, wilfulness, and averseness to good, appears in them? And when they creep out of infancy, there is a necessity of using the rod of correction, to drive away the foolishness that is bound in their hearts. Which shows, that if grace prevail not, the child will be as Ishmael, *a wild ass man*, as the word is, Gen. xvi. 12.

3. Take a view of the manifold gross outbreakings of sin in the world: "The wickedness of man is" yet "great in the earth." Behold the bitter fruits of the corruption of our nature. "By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood." The world is filled with filthiness, and all manner of lewdness, wickedness, and profanity. Whence is this deluge of sin on the earth, but from the breaking up of the fountains of *the great deep*, the heart of man? out of which proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, &c. Ye will, it may be, thank God with a whole heart, that ye are not like these other men; and indeed ye have better reason for it than I fear ye are aware of; for "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." As, looking into clear water, ye see your own face; so, looking into your own heart, ye may see other men's there; and looking into other men's, in them ye may see your own. So that the most vile and profane wretches that are in the world should serve you for a looking-glass, in which you ought to discern the corruption of your own nature; and if you do so, ye would, with a heart truly touched, thank God, and not yourselves, indeed, that ye are not as other men in your lives; seeing the corruption of nature is the same in you as in them.

4. Cast your eye upon these terrible convulsions the world is thrown into by the lusts of men. Lions make not a prey of lions, nor wolves of wolves; but men are turned wolves to one another, biting and devouring one another. Upon how slight occasions will men sheath their swords in one another's bowels! The world is a wilderness, where the clearest fire men can carry about with them will not fright away the wild beasts that inhabit it, (and that because they are men and not brutes,) but one way or other they will be wounded. Since Cain shed the blood of Abel, the earth has been turned into a slaughter-house. When we see the world in such a ferment, every one stabbing another with words or swords, we may conclude there is an evil spirit among them. These violent heats among Adam's sons speak the whole body to be distempered, the whole head to be sick, and the whole heart faint. They surely proceed from an inward cause: "Lusts that war in our members."

5. Consider the necessity of human laws fenced with terrors and severities; to which we may apply what the Apostle says, "That the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners," &c. Man was made for society; and God himself said to the first man, when he had created him, that it was "not meet that he should be alone:" yet the case is such now, that, in society, he must be hedged in with thorns. And that from hence we may the better see the corruption of man's nature, consider, (1.) Every man naturally loves to be at full liberty himself; to have his own will for his law; and if he were

to follow his natural inclinations, would vote himself out of the reach of all laws divine and human. And hence some (the power of whose hands has been answerable to their natural inclination) have indeed made themselves absolute, and above laws; agreeable to man's monstrous design at first, "to be as gods." Yet, (2.) There is no man that would willingly adventure to live in a lawless society: and, therefore, even pirates and robbers have laws among themselves, though the whole society casts off all respect to law and right. Thus men discover themselves to be conscious of the corruption of nature; not daring to trust one another but upon security. (3.) How dangerous soever it is to break through the hedge, yet the violence of lust makes many adventure daily to run the risk. They will not only sacrifice their credit and conscience, (which last is highly esteemed in the world,) but, for the pleasure of a few moments, immediately succeeded with terror from within, they will lay themselves open to a violent death, by the laws of the land wherein they live. (4.) The laws are often made to yield to men's lusts. Sometimes whole societies run into such extravagances, that, like a company of prisoners, they break off their fetters, and put their guard to flight; and the voice of laws cannot be heard for the noise of arms. And seldom is there a time wherein there are not some persons so great and daring, that the laws dare not look their impetuous lusts in the face; which made David say, in the case of Joab, who had murdered Abner, "These men, the sons of Zeruiah, be too hard for me." Lusts sometimes grow too strong for laws, so that the law is slacked, as the pulse of a dy-

ing man. (5.) Consider what necessity often appears of amending old laws, and making new ones; which have their rise from new crimes that man's nature is very fruitful of. There would be no need of mending the hedge, if men were not like unruly beasts, still breaking it down. It is astonishing to see what figure the Israelites, who were separated to God from among all the nations in the earth, do make in their history; what horrible confusions were among them when there was no king in Israel, as you may see, Judges xviii. xix. xx. xxi. How hard it was to reform them, when they had the best of magistrates; and how quickly they turned aside again when they got wicked rulers. I cannot but think, that one grand design of that sacred history was to discover the corruption of man's nature, the absolute need of the Messiah and his grace; and that we ought, in the reading of it, to improve it to that end. How cutting is that word the Lord has to Samuel concerning Saul: "The same shall reign over (or, as the word is, *shall restrain*) my people." O the corruption of man's nature! the awe and dread of the God of heaven restrains them not; but they must have gods on earth to do it, "to put them to shame."

6. Consider the remains of that natural corruption in the saints. Though grace has entered, yet corruption is not quite expelled: though they have got the new creature, yet much of the old corrupt nature remains. And these struggle together within them, as the twins in Rebekah's womb. They find it present with them at all times, and in all places, even in the most retired corners. If a man have an ill neighbour, he may remove; if he have an ill servant,

he may put him away at the term : but should the saint go into a wilderness, or set up his tent in some remote rock in the sea, where never foot of man, beast, nor fowl had touched, there will it be with him. Should he be, with Paul, caught up to the third heavens, it shall come back with him. It follows him as the shadow doth the body. It is like the fig-tree on the wall, which, how nearly soever it was cut, yet still grew till the wall was thrown down : for the roots of it are fixed in the heart, while the saint is in the world, as with bands of iron and brass. It is especially active when he would do good. Hence, often in holy duties, the spirit even of a saint, as it were, evaporates ; and he is left ere he is aware, like Michal, with an image in the bed instead of a husband. I need not stand to prove the remains of the corruption of nature in the godly to themselves, for they groan under it ; and to prove it to them, were to hold out a candle to let men see the sun : and as for the wicked, they are ready to account mole-hills in the saints as big as mountains, if not to reckon them all hypocrites. But consider these few things on this head : (1.) If it be thus in the green tree, how must it be in the dry ? The saints are not born saints, but made so by the power of regenerating grace. Have they got a new nature, and yet so much of the old remains with them ? How great must that corruption be in others, where it is altogether unmixed with grace ! (2.) The saints groan under the remains of it, as a heavy burden. Hear the apostle—“ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” What though the carnal man lives at ease and quiet, and the corruption of

nature is not his burden: is he therefore free from it? No, no; only he is dead, and feels not the sinking weight. Many a groan is heard from a sick-bed, but never one from a grave. In the saint, as in the sick man, there is a mighty struggle—life and death striving for the mastery: but in the natural man, as in the dead corpse, there is no noise—because death bears full sway. (3.) The godly man resists the old corrupt nature: he strives to mortify it, yet it remains; he endeavours to starve it, and by that means to weaken it, yet it is active. How must it spread then, and strengthen itself in that soul, where it is not starved, but fed! And this is the case of all the unregenerate, who “make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” If the garden of the diligent afford him new work daily, in cutting off and rooting up, surely that of the sluggard must needs be all grown over with thorns.

Lastly, I shall add but one observation more, and that is, that in every man naturally the image of fallen Adam does appear. Some children, by the features and lineaments of their face, do, as it were, father themselves: and thus we do resemble our first parents; every one bears the image and impress of their fall upon him. And to evince the truth of this, I appeal to the consciences of all in these following particulars:—

1. Is not sinful curiosity natural to us? And is not this a print of Adam’s image? Is not man naturally much more desirous to know new things, than to practise old known truths? How like to old Adam do we look in this itching after novelties, and disrelishing old solid doctrines? We seek after

knowledge rather than holiness, and study most to know those things which are least edifying. Our wild and roving fancies need a bridle to curb them, while good solid affections must be quickened.

2. If the Lord, by his holy law and wise providence, do put a restraint upon us, to keep us back from any thing; doth not that restraint whet the edge of our natural inclinations, and make us so much the keener in our desires? And in this do we not betray it plainly that we are Adam's children? I think this cannot be denied; for daily observation evinceth, that it is a natural principle that "stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." The very heathens were convinced that man was possessed with this spirit of contradiction, though they knew not the spring of it. How often do men let themselves loose in those things, in which, if God had left them at liberty, they would have bound up themselves! But corrupt nature takes a pleasure in the very jumping over the hedge. And is it not a repeating of our father's folly, that men will rather climb for forbidden fruit, than gather what is shaken off the tree of good providence to them, when they have God's express allowance for it.

3. Which of all the children of Adam is not naturally disposed to hear the "instruction that causeth to err?" And was not this the rock our first parents split upon? Gen. iii. 4, 6. How apt is weak man, ever since that time, to parley with temptations: "God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not:" but readily doth he listen to Satan. Men might often come fair off, if they would dismiss temptations with abhorrence when first they appear; if

they would nip them in the bud, they would soon die away; but, alas! when we see the train laid for us, and the fire put to it, yet we stand till it run along, and we be blown up with its force.

4. Do not the eyes in our head often blind the eyes of the mind? And was not this the very case of our first parents? Gen. iii. 6. Man is never more blind than when he is looking on the objects that are most pleasant to sense. Since the eyes of our first parents were opened to the forbidden fruit, men's eyes have been the gates of destruction to their souls; at which impure imaginations and sinful desires have entered the heart, to the wounding of the soul, wasting of the conscience, and bringing dismal effects sometimes on whole societies, as in Achan's case. Holy Job was aware of this danger, from these two little rowling bodies, which a very small splinter of wood will make useless; so as (with that king who durst not, with his ten thousand, meet him that came with twenty thousand against him) "he sendeth and desireth conditions of peace." "I have made a covenant with mine eyes," &c. Job xxxi. 1.

5. Is it not natural to us to care for the body, even at the expense of the soul? This was one ingredient in the sin of our first parents, Gen. iii. 6. O how happy might we be, if we were but at half the pains about our souls that we bestow upon our bodies! If that question, "What must I do to be saved?" did run but near as oft through our minds as those other questions do, "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed?" many a hopeless case would now become very hopeful. But the truth is, most men live as if

they were nothing but a lump of flesh ; or as if their souls served for no other use, but, like salt, to keep their body from corrupting. They are flesh, they mind the things of the flesh, and they live after the flesh. If the consent of the flesh be got to an action, the consent of the conscience is rarely waited for ; yea, the body is often served when the conscience has entered a dissent against it.

6. Is not every one, by nature, discontent with his present lot in the world, or with some one thing or other in it ? This also was Adam's case, Gen. iii. 5, 6. Some one thing is always missing ; so that man is a creature given to changes. And if any doubt of this, let them look over all their enjoyments ; and, after a review of them, listen to their own hearts, and they will hear a secret murmuring for want of something ; though, perhaps, if they considered the matter aright, they would see that it is better for them to want than to have that something. Since the hearts of our first parents flew out at their eyes on the forbidden fruit, and a night of darkness was thereby brought on the world, their posterity have a natural disease, which Solomon calls "the wandering of the desire," (or, as the word is, "the walking of the soul.") This is a sort of diabolical trance, wherein the soul traverseth the world ; feeds itself with a thousand airy nothings ; snatcheth at this and the other created excellency, in imagination and desire ; goes here and there, and every where, except where it should go. And the soul is never cured of this disease, till overcoming grace bring it back, to take up its everlasting rest in God through Christ : but till this be, if man were set again in

paradise, the garden of the Lord, all the pleasures there would not keep him from looking, yea, and leaping over the hedge a second time.

7. Are we not far more easily impressed and influenced by evil counsels and examples, than by those that are good? You will see this was the ruin of Adam, Gen. iii. 6. Evil example, to this day, is one of Satan's master-devices to ruin men. And though we have by nature more of the fox than of the lamb, yet that ill property some observe in this creature, namely, that if one lamb skip into a water, the rest that are near will suddenly follow, may be observed also in the disposition of the children of men; to whom it is very natural to embrace an evil way, because they see others upon it before them. Ill example has frequently the force of a violent stream, to carry us over plain duty, but especially if the example be given by those we bear a great affection to: our affection, in that case, blinds our judgment, and what we would abhor in others is complied with to humour them. And nothing is more plain, than that generally men choose rather to do what the most do, than what the best do.

8. Who of all Adam's sons needs be taught the art of "sewing fig-leaves together," to cover their nakedness? Gen. iii. 7. When we had ruined ourselves, and made ourselves naked to our shame, we naturally seek to help ourselves by ourselves; and many poor shifts are fallen upon, as silly and insignificant as Adam's fig-leaves. What pains are men at to cover their sins from their own consciences, and draw all the fair colours upon it that they can? And when once convictions are fastened upon them, so

that they cannot but see themselves naked, it is as natural for them to attempt to spin a cover to it out of their own bowels, as for fishes to swim in the waters, or birds to fly in the air. Therefore, the first question of the convinced is, ‘What shall we do? how shall we qualify ourselves? what shall we perform?’ Not minding that the new creature is God’s own workmanship, more than Adam thought of being clothed with the skins of sacrifices, Gen. iii. 21.

9. Do not Adam’s children naturally follow his footsteps, in hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord? Gen. iii. 8. We are every whit as blind in this matter as he was, who thought to hide himself from the presence of God among the shady trees of the garden. We are very apt to promise ourselves more security in a secret sin, than in one that is openly committed. “The eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me.” And men will freely do that in secret, which they would be ashamed to do in the presence of a child; as if darkness could hide from an all-seeing God. Are we not naturally careless of communion with God; ay, and averse to it? Never was there any communion betwixt God and Adam’s children, where the Lord himself had not the first word. If he would let them alone, they would never inquire after him. “I hide me.” Did he seek after a hiding God? Very far from it. He went on in the way of his heart.

10. How loath are men to confess sin, to take guilt and shame to themselves! And was it not thus in the case before us? Gen. iii. 10. Adam confesseth his nakedness, which he could not get denied;

but not one word he says of his sin. Here was the reason of it—he would fain have hid it if he could. It is as natural for us to hide sin as to commit it. Many sad instances thereof we have in this world; but a far clearer proof of it we shall get at the day of judgment, the day in which “God will judge the secrets of men.” Many a foul mouth will then be seen, which is now wiped, and saith, “I have done no wickedness.”

Lastly, Is it not natural for us to extenuate our sin, and transfer the guilt upon others? And when God examined our guilty first parents, did not Adam lay the blame on the woman? and did not the woman lay the blame on the serpent? Gen. iii. 12, 13. Now Adam’s children need not be taught this hellish policy; for before they can well speak (if they cannot get the fact denied) they will cunningly lisp out something to lessen their fault, and lay the blame upon another. Nay, so natural is this to men, that in the greatest of sins they will lay the fault upon God himself: they will blaspheme his holy providence, under the mistaken name of misfortune or ill luck, and thereby lay the blame of their sin at heaven’s door. And was not this one of Adam’s tricks after his fall? “And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” Observe the order of the speech. He makes his apology in the first place; and then comes his confession: his apology is long; but his confession very short: it is all comprehended in a word, “and I did eat.” How pointed and distinct is his apology, as if he was afraid his meaning should have been mistaken: *the woman,*

says he, or that woman, as if he would have pointed the Judge to his own work, of which we read, Gen. ii. 22. There was but one woman then in the world; so that one would think he needed not have been so nice and exact in pointing at her; yet she is as carefully marked out in his defence, as if there had been ten thousand. "The woman whom thou gavest me." Here he speaks as if he had been ruined with God's gift. And to make the gift look the blacker, it is added to all this, "thou gavest to be with me," as my constant companion, to stand by me as a helper. This looks as if Adam would have fathered an ill design upon the Lord, in giving him this gift. And after all, there is a new demonstrative here, before the sentence is complete: he says not, "the woman gave me," but, "the woman she gave me:" emphatically, as if he had said, *she*, even *she* gave me of the tree. This much for his apology. But his confession is quickly over, in one word, "and I did eat." And there is nothing here to point to himself, and as little to show what he had eaten. How natural is this black art to Adam's posterity! He that runs may read it. So universally does Solomon's observation hold true, "The foolishness of man perverteth his ways, and his heart fretteth against the Lord." Let us then call fallen Adam, *father*; let us not deny the relation, seeing we bear his image.

And now to close this point, sufficiently confirmed by concurring evidence from the Lord's word, our own experience and observation; let us be persuaded to believe the doctrine of the corruption of our nature; and to look to the second Adam, the blessed

Jesus, for the application of his precious blood to remove the guilt of this sin; and for the efficacy of his Holy Spirit to make us new creatures, knowing that, “except we be born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

SECONDLY, I proceed to inquire into the corruption of nature, in the several parts thereof. But who can comprehend it? Who can take the exact dimensions of it, in its breadth, length, height, and depth? “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” However, we may quickly perceive as much of it as may be matter of deepest humiliation, and may discover to us the absolute necessity of regeneration. Man in his natural state is altogether corrupt. Both soul and body are polluted, as the apostle proves at large, Rom. iii. 10—18. As for the soul, this natural corruption has spread itself through all the faculties thereof; and is to be found in the understanding, the will, the affections, the conscience, and the memory.

Of the Corruption of the Understanding.

I. The understanding, that leading faculty, is despoiled of its primitive glory, and covered over with confusion. We have fallen into the hands of our grand adversary, as Samson into the hands of the Philistines, and are deprived of our two eyes. “There is none that understandeth.” “Mind and conscience are defiled.” The natural man’s apprehension of divine things is corrupt: “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself.” His judgment is corrupt, and cannot be otherwise, seeing his

eye is evil: and therefore the Scriptures, to show that men did all wrong, says, "Every one did that which was right in his own eyes." And his imaginations, or reasonings, must be cast down by the power of the word, being of a piece with his judgment. But, to point out this corruption of the mind or understanding more particularly, let these following things be considered:—

1. There is a natural weakness in the minds of men with respect to spiritual things. The apostle determines, concerning every one that is not endued with the graces of the Spirit, "that he is blind, and cannot see afar off." Hence the Spirit of God, in the Scriptures, clothes, as it were, divine truths with earthly figures, even as parents teach their children, "using similitudes:" which, though it doth not cure, yet doth evidence this natural weakness in the minds of men. But we want not plain proofs of it from experience. As, (1.) How hard a task is it to teach many people the common principles of our holy religion, and to make truths so plain as they may understand them? Here there must be "precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line." Try the same persons in other things, they shall be found "wiser in their generation than the children of light." They understand their work and business in the world as well as their neighbours, though they be very stupid and unteachable in the matters of God. Tell them how they may advance their worldly wealth, or how they may gratify their lusts, and they will quickly understand these things; though it is very hard to make them know how their souls may be saved, or how their

hearts may find rest in Jesus Christ. (2.) Consider those who have many advantages beyond the common lot of mankind: who have had the benefit of good education and instruction; yea, and are blessed with the light of grace in that measure wherein it is distributed to the saints on earth; yet how small a portion have they of the knowledge of divine things! What ignorance and confusion do still remain in their minds! How often are they mired, even in the matter of practical truths, and speak as a child in these things! It is a pitiful weakness, that we cannot perceive the things which God has revealed to us; and it must needs be a sinful weakness, since the law of God requires us to know and believe them. (3.) What dangerous mistakes are to be found amongst men in their concerns of greatest weight! What woful delusions prevail over them! Do we not often see those who otherwise are the wisest of men, the most notorious fools with respect to their souls' interest? "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent." Many that are eagle-eyed in the trifles of time, are like owls and bats in the light of life. Nay, truly, the life of every natural man is but one continued dream and delusion; out of which he never awakes, till, either by a new light darted from heaven into his soul, he come to himself, or "in hell he lift up his eyes." And, therefore, in Scripture account, be he ever so wise, he is a fool and a simple one.

2. Man's understanding is naturally overwhelmed with gross darkness in spiritual things. Man, at the instigation of the devil, attempting to break out a new light in his mind, (Gen. iii. 5.) broke up the

doors of the bottomless pit; so as, by the smoke thereof, he was buried in darkness. When God at first had made man, his mind was a lamp of light; but now, when he comes to make him over again, in regeneration, he finds it darkness: "Ye were sometimes darkness." Sin has closed the window of the soul; darkness is over all that region. It is the land of darkness and shadow of death, where the light is as darkness. The prince of darkness reigns there, and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is thy case, whosoever thou art, that art not born again. And that you may be convinced in this matter, take these following evidences of it:—

Evidence 1. The darkness that was upon the face of the world before, and at the time when Christ came, arising as the sun of righteousness upon the earth. When Adam, by his sin, had lost that primitive light wherewith he was endued in his creation, it pleased God to make a gracious revelation of his mind and will to him, touching the way of salvation, Gen. iii. 15. This was handed down by him and other godly fathers before the flood: yet the natural darkness of the mind of man prevailed so far against that revelation, as to obliterate all sense of true religion from the old world, except what remained in Noah's family, which was preserved in the ark. After the flood, as men multiplied on the earth, the natural darkness of mind prevails again, and the light decays, till it died out among the generality of mankind, and is preserved only among the posterity of Shem. And even with them it was well near its

setting, when God called Abraham from serving other gods. God gives Abraham a more clear and full revelation, and he communicates the same to his family. Yet the natural darkness wears it out at length, save that it was preserved among the posterity of Jacob. They being carried down into Egypt, that darkness prevailed so as to leave them very little sense of true religion; and a new revelation behooved to be made them in the wilderness. And many a cloud of darkness got above that, now and then, during the time from Moses to Christ. When Christ came, the world was divided into Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, and the true light with them, were within an inclosure. Betwixt them and the Gentile world, there was a partition wall of God's making, namely, the ceremonial law; and upon that there was reared up another of man's own making, namely, a rooted enmity betwixt the parties. If we look abroad, without the inclosure, (and except those proselytes of the Gentiles, who, by means of some rays of light breaking forth unto them from within the inclosure, having renounced idolatry, worshipped the true God, but did not conform to the Mosaical rites,) we see nothing but dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty. Gross darkness covered the face of the Gentile world; and the way of salvation was utterly unknown among them. They were drowned in superstition and idolatry; and had multiplied their idols to such a vast number, that above thirty thousand are reckoned to have been worshipped by those of Europe alone. Whatever wisdom was among their philosophers, "the world by (that) wisdom knew not God," and all their researches

in religion were but groping in the dark. If we look within the inclosure, (and except a few that were groaning and waiting for the consolation of Israel,) we will see a gross darkness on the face of that generation. Though to them were committed the oracles of God, yet they were most corrupt in their doctrine. Their traditions were multiplied, but the knowledge of these things wherein the life of religion lies was lost : masters of Israel knew not the nature and necessity of regeneration. Their religion was to build on their birth-privilege, as children of Abraham, to glory in their circumcision, and other external ordinances : and to rest in the law, after they had, by their false glosses, cut it so short, as they might go well near to the fulfilling of it.

Thus was darkness over the face of the world, when Christ, the true light, came into it ; and so is darkness over every soul, till he, as the day-star, arise in the heart. The former is an evidence of the latter. What, but the natural darkness of men's minds, could still thus wear out the light of external revelation, in a matter upon which eternal happiness depended ? Men did not forget the way of preserving their lives, but how quickly did they lose the knowledge of the way of salvation of their souls, which are of infinitely more weight and worth ! When patriarchs' and prophets' preaching was ineffectual, men behooved to be taught of God himself, who alone can open the eyes of the understanding. But, that it might appear that the corruption of man's mind lay deeper than to be cured by mere external revelation, there were but very few converted by Christ's preaching, who spake as never man spake. The

great cure on the generation remained to be performed by the Spirit accompanying the preaching of the apostles; who, according to the promise, were to do greater works. And if we look to the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord, we will find, that by applying the remedy to the soul for the cure of bodily distempers, (as in the case of the man sick of the palsy, Matth. ix. 2.) he plainly discovered, that it was his main errand into the world to cure the diseases of the soul. I find a miracle wrought upon one that was born blind, performed in such a way as seems to have been designed to let the world see in it, as in a glass, their case and cure: "He made clay, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay." What could more fitly represent the blindness of men's minds, than eyes closed up with earth? Thus the Lord's word discovers the design of that strange work; and by it shows us, that the eyes of our understanding are naturally shut. Then the blind man must go and wash off his clay in the pool of Siloam; no other water will serve this purpose. If that pool had not represented him, whom the Father *sent* into the world, *to open the blind eyes*, I think the evangelist had not given us the interpretation of the name, which he says signifies *sent*, John ix. 7. And so we may conclude, that the natural darkness of our minds is such, as there is no cure for, but from the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ, whose eye-salve only can make us see.

Evid. 2. Every natural man's heart and life is a mass of darkness, disorder, and confusion, how refined soever he appear in the sight of men. "For we ourselves also," saith the apostle Paul, "were

sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures ;” and yet, at that time which this text looks to, he was “ blameless, touching the righteousness which is in the law.” This is a plain evidence that “ the eye is evil, the whole body being full of darkness.” The unrenewed part of mankind is rambling through the world like so many blind men, who will neither take a guide, nor can guide themselves ; and therefore are falling over this and the other precipice into destruction. Some are running after their covetousness, till they be pierced through with many sorrows ; some sticking in the mire of sensuality ; others dashing themselves on the rock of pride and self-conceit ; every one stumbling on some one stone of stumbling or other. And therefore, “ Wo unto the (blind) world because of offences.” Errors in judgment swarm in the world ; because it is “ night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.” All the unregenerate are utterly mistaken in the point of true happiness ; for though Christianity hath fixed that matter in point of principle, yet nothing less than overcoming grace can fix it in the practical judgment. All men agree in the desire to be happy ; but amongst unrenewed men, touching the way to happiness, there are almost as many opinions as there are men ; they being “ turned every one to his own way.” Look into thine own unregenerate heart, and there thou wilt see all turned upside down—heaven lying under, and earth at the top : look into thy life ; there thou mayest see how thou art playing the madman, snatching at shadows, and neglecting the substance.

Evid. 3. The natural man is always as a work-

man left without light ; either trifling or doing mischief. Try to catch thy heart at any time thou wilt, and thou shalt find it either “ weaving the spider’s web,” or “ hatching cockatrice’ eggs ;” roving through the world, or digging into the pit ; filled with vanity, or else with vileness : a sad sign of a dark mind.

Evid. 4. The natural man is void of the saving knowledge of spiritual things. He knows not what a God he has to do with, he is unacquainted with Christ, and knows not what sin is. The greatest graceless wits are blind as moles in these things. Aye, but some such can speak of them to good purpose ; and so might these Israelites of the temptations, signs, and miracles their eyes had seen, to whom, nevertheless, the Lord had not “ given a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto that day.” Many a man that bears the name of a Christian may make Pharaoh’s confession of faith, “ I know not the Lord ;” neither will they let go what he commands them to part with. God is with them as a prince in disguise among his subjects, who meets with no better treatment from them than if they were his fellows. Do they know Christ, or see his glory, and any beauty in him for which he is to be desired ? If they did, they would not slight him as they do : a view of his glory would so darken all created excellency, that they would take him instead of all, and gladly close with him, as he offereth himself in the gospel. Do they know what sin is, who hug the serpent in their bosom, hold fast deceit, and refuse to let it go ? I own, indeed, they may have a natural knowledge of those things, as the unbelieving Jews had of Christ, whom they saw and conversed

with : but there was a spiritual glory in him, perceived by believers only ; and, in respect of that glory, the unbelieving world knew him not. But the spiritual knowledge of them they cannot have ; it is above the reach of the carnal mind. “ The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.” He may indeed discourse of them ; but no other way than one can talk of honey or vinegar, who never tasted them. He has some notions of spiritual truths, but sees not the things themselves that are wrapt up in the words of truth ; “ understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” In a word, natural men fear, seek, confess, they know not what. Thus may you see, man’s understanding naturally is overwhelmed with gross darkness in spiritual things.

3. There is in the mind of man a natural bias to evil, whereby it comes to pass, that whatever difficulties it finds, while occupied about things truly good, it acts with a great deal of ease in evil ; as being, in that case, in its own element. The carnal mind drives heavily in the thoughts of good, but furiously in the thoughts of evil. While holiness is before it, fetters are upon it ; but when once it has got over the hedge, it is as the bird got out of the cage, and becomes a free-thinker indeed. Let us reflect a little on the apprehension and imagination of the carnal mind, and we shall find incontestable evidence of this woful bias to evil.

Evidence 1. As when a man, by a violent stroke on the head, loseth his sight, there ariseth to him a

kind of false light, whereby he perceiveth a thousand airy nothings; so man, being struck blind to all that is truly good and for his eternal interest, has a light of another sort brought into his mind: his eyes are opened, knowing evil, and so are the words of the tempter verified, Gen. iii. 5. The words of the prophet are plain, "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." The mind of man has a natural dexterity to devise mischief; none are so simple as to want skill to contrive ways to gratify their lusts, and ruin their souls. None needs to be taught this black art; but as weeds grow up of their own accord in the neglected ground, so doth this wisdom, which is "earthly, sensual, devilish," grow up in the minds of men, by virtue of the corruption of their nature. Why should we be surprised with the product of corrupt wits; their cunning devices to affront heaven, to oppose and run down truth and holiness, and to gratify their own and other men's lusts? They roll with the stream, no wonder they make great progress; and the works of darkness are contrived with greater advantage, that the mind is wholly destitute of spiritual light, which, if it were in them in any measure, would so far mar the work. "Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin:" he does it not as by art, for "his seed remaineth in him." But, on the other hand, "It is a sport to a fool to do mischief; but a man of understanding hath wisdom." 'To do witty wickedness nicely,' as the words import, is as a sport or a play to a fool; it comes off with him easily: and why, but because he is a fool, and hath not wisdom, which would mar the contrivances of darkness? The more natural a thing is, it is done the more easily.

Evid. 2. Let the corrupt mind have but the advantage of one's being employed in, or present at, some piece of service to God; that so the device, if not in itself sinful, yet may become sinful by its unseasonableness: it shall quickly fall on some device or expedient by its starting aside, which deliberation in season could not produce. Thus Saul, who wist not what to do before the priest began to consult God, is quickly determined when once the priest's hand was in: his own heart then gave him an answer, and would not allow him to wait an answer from the Lord. Such a devilish dexterity hath the carnal mind in devising what may most effectually divert men from their duty to God!

Evid. 3. Doth not the carnal mind naturally strive to grasp spiritual things in imagination, as if the soul were quite immersed in flesh and blood, and would turn every thing into its own shape? Let men who are used to the forming of the most abstracted notions, look into their own souls, and they shall find this bias in their minds, whereof the idolatry which did of old, and still doth, so much prevail in the world, is an incontestable evidence: for it plainly discovers, that men naturally would have a visible deity, and see what they worship; and therefore they "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image." The reformation of these nations (blessed be the Lord for it!) hath banished idolatry and images too out of our churches; but heart reformation only can break down mental idolatry, and banish the more subtle and refined image-worship and representations of the Deity out of the minds of men. The world, in the time of its darkness, was never

more prone to the former, than the unsanctified mind is to the latter. And hence are horrible, monstrous, and misshapen thoughts of God, Christ, the glory above, and all spiritual things.

Evid. 4. What a difficult task is it to detain the carnal mind before the Lord ! How averse is it to the entertaining of good thoughts, and dwelling in the meditation of spiritual things ! If one be driven, at any time, to think of the great concerns of his soul, it is no harder work to hold in an unruly hungry beast, than to hedge in the carnal mind, that it get not away to the vanities of the world again. When God is speaking to men by his word, or they are speaking to him in prayer, doth not the mind often leave them before the Lord, like so many “idols that have eyes, but see not, and ears, but hear not ?” The carcase is laid down before God, but the world gets away the heart ; though the eyes be closed, the man sees a thousand vanities. The mind, in the mean time, is like a bird got loose out of the cage, skipping from bush to bush ; so that, in effect, the man never comes to himself, till he be “ gone from the presence of the Lord.” Say not, it is impossible to get the mind fixed. It is hard, indeed, but not impossible. Grace from the Lord can do it ; agreeable objects will do it. A pleasant speculation will arrest the minds of the inquisitive. The worldly man’s mind is in little hazard of wandering, when he is contriving of business, casting up his accounts, or telling his money : if he answer you not at first, he tells you he did not hear you, he was busy, his mind was fixed. Were we admitted into the presence of a king to petition for our lives, we would be in no

hazard of gazing through the chamber of presence : but here lies the case—the carnal mind, employed about any spiritual good, is out of its element, and therefore cannot fix.

Evid. 5. But however hard it is to keep the mind on good thoughts, it sticks as glue to what is evil and corrupt like itself: “ Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.” Their eyes cannot cease from sin, (so the words are constructed,) that is, their hearts and minds, venting by the eyes what is within, are like a furious beast, which cannot be held in, when once it has got out its head. Let the corrupt imagination once be let loose on its proper object, it will be found hard work to call it back again, though both reason and will be for its retreat. For then it is in its own element; and to draw it off from its impurities, is as the rending of a limb from a man. It runs like fire set to a train of powder, that resteth not till it can get no further.

Evid. 6. Consider how the carnal imagination supplies the want of real objects to the corrupt heart; that it may make sinners happy, at least in the imaginary enjoyment of their lusts. Thus the corrupt heart feeds itself with imagination-sins: the unclean person is filled with speculative impurities, having eyes full of adultery; the covetous man fills his heart with the world, though he cannot get his hands full of it; the malicious person, with delight, acts his revenge within his own breast; the envious man, within his own narrow soul, beholds, with satisfaction, his neighbour laid low enough; and every lust finds the corrupt imagination a friend to it in time of need.

And this it doth, not only when people are awake, but sometimes even when they are asleep; whereby it comes to pass, that these sins are acted in dreams, which their hearts were carried out after while they were awake. I know some do question the sinfulness of these things: but can it be thought they are consistent with that holy nature and frame of spirit which was in innocent Adam, and in Jesus Christ, and should be in every man? It is the corruption of nature, then, that makes filthy dreamers condemned. Solomon had experience of the exercise of grace in sleep: in a dream he prayed; in a dream he made the best choice; both were accepted of God, 1 Kings iii. 5—15. And if a man may, in his sleep, do what is good and acceptable to God, why may he not also, when asleep, do that which is evil and displeasing to God? The same Solomon would have men aware of this; and prescribes the best remedy against it, namely, the law upon the heart, Prov. vi. 21. “When thou sleepest, it shall keep thee;” to wit, from sinning in thy sleep; that is, from sinful dreams. For one’s being kept from sin is the immediate proper effect of the law of God impressed upon the heart. “For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.” Now, the law is a lamp and light, as it guides in the way of duty; and instructing reproofs from the law, are the way of life, as they keep from sin: neither do they guide into the way of peace, but as they lead into the way of duty; nor do they keep a man out of trouble, but as they keep him from sin. And remarkable is the particular in which Solomon instanceth, namely, the sin of un-

cleanness: "To keep thee from the evil woman," &c. ver. 24.—which is to be joined with ver. 22, inclosing ver. 23 in a parenthesis, as some versions have it. These things may suffice to convince us of the natural bias of the mind to evil.

4. There is in the carnal mind an opposition to spiritual truths, and an aversion to the receiving of them. It is as little a friend to divine truths, as it is to holiness. The truths of natural religion, which do, as it were, force their entry into the minds of natural men, they hold prisoners in unrighteousness. And as for the truths of revealed religion, there is an evil heart of unbelief in them, which opposeth their entry; and there is an armed force necessary to captivate the mind to the belief of them. God has made a revelation of his mind and will to sinners, touching the way of salvation; he has given us the doctrine of his holy word: but do natural men believe it indeed? No, they do not: "For he that believeth not on the Son of God, believeth not God;" as is plain from 1 John v. 10. They believe not the promises of the word; they look on them, in effect, only as fair words: for those that receive them are thereby made partakers of the divine nature. The promises are as silver cords let down from heaven to draw sinners unto God, and to waft them over into the promised land; but they cast them from them. They believe not the threatenings of the word. As men travelling in deserts carry fire about with them to fright away wild beasts, so God has made his law a fiery law, hedging it about with threats of wrath; but men naturally are more brutish than beasts themselves, and will needs touch the

fiery smoking mountain, though they should be thrust through with a dart. I doubt not but most, if not all of you, who are yet in the black state of nature, will here plead, Not guilty: but remember, the carnal Jews in Christ's time were as confident as you are that they believed Moses. But he confutes their confidence, roundly telling them, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me." Did ye believe the truths of God, ye durst not reject, as ye do, him who is truth itself. The very difficulty you find in assenting to this truth, bewrays that unbelief I am charging you with. Has it not proceeded so far with some at this day, that it has steeled their foreheads with the impudence and impiety, openly to reject all revealed religion? Surely it is out of the abundance of the heart their mouth speaketh. But though you set not your mouths against the heavens as they do, the same bitter root of unbelief is in all men by nature, and reigns in you, and will reign, till overcoming grace captivate your minds to the belief of the truth. To convince you in this point, consider these three things:—

Evidence 1. How few are there who have been blessed with an inward illumination by the special operation of the Spirit of Christ, letting them into a view of divine truths in their spiritual and heavenly lustre! How have you learned the truths of religion, which you pretend to believe! Ye have them merely by the benefit of external revelation, and of your education; so that you are Christians just because you were not born and bred in a Pagan, but in a Christian country. Ye are strangers to the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with

the word in your hearts; and so you cannot have the assurance of faith, with respect to that outward divine revelation made in the word. And, therefore, ye are still unbelievers. “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me,” says our Lord. Now ye have not come to Christ, therefore ye have not been taught of God; ye have not been so taught, and therefore ye have not come: ye believe not. Behold the revelation from which the faith even of the fundamental principles in religion doth spring: “Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” If ever the Spirit of the Lord take a dealing with thee, to work in thee that faith which is of the operation of God, it may be, as much time will be spent in razing the old foundation, as will make thee find a necessity of the working of his mighty power, to enable thee to believe the very foundation-principles, which now thou thinkest thou makest no doubt of.

Evid. 2. How many professors have made shipwreck of their faith (such as it was) in time of temptation and trial! See how they fall, like stars from heaven, when Antichrist prevails: “God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth.” They fall into damning delusions, because they never really believed the truth, though they themselves, and others too, thought they did believe it. That house is built upon the sand, and that

faith is but ill founded, that cannot bear out, but is quite overthrown when the storm comes.

Evid. 3. Consider the utter inconsistency of most men's lives, with the principles of religion which they profess : ye may as soon bring east and west together, as their principles and practice. Men believe that fire will burn them, and therefore they will not throw themselves into it : but the truth is, most men live as if they thought the gospel a mere fable ; and the wrath of God revealed in his word against their unrighteousness and ungodliness, a mere scarecrow. If you believe the doctrines of the word, how is it that you are so unconcerned about the state of your souls before the Lord ? How is it that you are so little concerned with that weighty point, whether you be born again or not ? Many live as they were born, and are like to die as they live, and yet live in peace. Do such believe the sinfulness and misery of a natural state ? Do they believe they are *children of wrath* ? Do they believe there is no salvation without regeneration ? and no regeneration but what makes man a new creature ? If you believe the promises of the word, why do you not embrace them, and labour to enter into the promised rest ? What sluggard would not dig for a hid treasure, if he really believed he might so obtain it ? Men will work and sweat for a maintenance, because they believe that by so doing they will get it ; yet they will be at no tolerable pains for "the eternal weight of glory : " why, but because they do not believe the word of promise ? If you believe the threatenings, how is it that you live in your sins, live out of Christ, and yet hope for mercy ? Do such believe God to be the

holy and just One, who “will by no means clear the guilty?” No, no; none believe: “none (or next to none) believe what a just God the Lord is, and how severely he punisheth.”

5. There is in the mind of man a natural proneness to lies and falsehood, which makes for the safety of lusts. “They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.” We have this with the rest of the corruption of our nature from our first parents. God revealed the truth to them; but through the solicitation of the tempter, they first doubted of it; then disbelieved it, and embraced a lie instead of it. And for an incontestable evidence hereof, we may see that first article of the devil’s creed, “ye shall not surely die,” which was obtruded by him on our first parents, and by them received; naturally embraced by their posterity, and held fast till a light from heaven oblige them to quit it. It spreads itself through the lives of natural men; who, till their consciences be awakened, walk after their own lusts; still retaining the principle, “that they shall not surely die.” And this is often improved to that perfection, that the man can say, over the belly of the denounced curse, “I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.” Whatever advantage the truths of God have over error by means of education or otherwise, error has always, with the natural man, this advantage against truth, namely, that there is something within him which says, ‘O that it were true!’ so that the mind lies fair for assenting to it. And here is the reason of it: The true doctrine is, “the doctrine that is according to godliness,” and “the truth which is after

godliness." Error is the doctrine which is according to ungodliness; for there is never an error in the mind, nor an untruth vented in the world, (in matters of religion,) but what has an affinity with one corruption of the heart or other. "They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." So that truth and error, being otherwise attended with equal advantages for their reception, error, by this means, has most ready access into the minds of men in their natural state. Wherefore it is nothing strange, that men reject the simplicity of gospel truths and institutions, and greedily embrace error and external pomp in religion, seeing they are so agreeable to the lusts of the heart, and the vanity of the mind of the natural man. And from hence also it is, that so many embrace atheistical principles: for none do it but in compliance with their irregular passions; none but those whose advantage it would be that there were no God.

Lastly, Man naturally is high-minded: for when the gospel comes in power to him, it is employed in "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." Lowliness of mind is not a flower that grows in the field of nature; but is planted by God in a renewed heart, and learned of the lowly Jesus. It is natural to man to think highly of himself, and what is his own: for the stroke he has got by his fall in Adam, has produced a false light, whereby mole-hills about him appear like mountains; and a thousand airy beauties present themselves to his deluded fancy. "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." His way is right, because it

is his own; “for every way of a man is right in his own eyes.” His state is good, because he knows none better; he is “alive without the law,” and therefore his hope is strong, and his confidence firm. It is another tower of Babel, reared up against heaven; and shall not fall while the power of darkness can hold it up. The word batters it, yet it stands; one while, breaches are made in it, but they are quickly repaired; at another time, it is all made to shake, but still it is kept up; till either God himself, by his Spirit, raise an heart-quake within the man, which tumbles it down, and leaves not one stone upon another; or death batter it down, and raze the foundations of it. And as the natural man thinks highly of himself, so he thinks meanly of God, whatever he pretends: “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.” The doctrine of the gospel, and the mystery of Christ, are foolishness to him; and in his practice he treats them as such. He brings the word and the works of God in the government of the world, before the bar of his carnal reason; and there they are presumptuously censured and condemned, Hos. xiv. 9. Sometimes the ordinary restraint of providence is taken off, and Satan is permitted to stir up the carnal mind: and, in that case, it is like an ant’s nest, uncovered and disturbed: doubts, denials, and hellish reasonings crowd in it, and cannot be laid by all the arguments brought against them, till a power from on high captivate the mind, and still the mutiny of the corrupt principles.

Thus much of the corruption of the understanding: which, although the half be not told, may dis-

cover to you the absolute necessity of regenerating grace. Call the understanding now Ichabod; for "the glory is departed" from it. Consider this, ye that are yet in the state of nature, and groan ye out your case before the Lord, that the sun of righteousness may arise upon you before you be shut up in everlasting darkness. What avails your worldly wisdom? What do your attainments in religion avail, while your understanding lies yet wrapt up in its natural darkness and confusion, utterly void of the light of life? Whatever be the natural man's gifts or attainments, we must "pronounce him utterly unclean, his plague is in his head." But that is not all: it is in his heart too: his will is corrupted, as I shall soon show.

Of the Corruption of the Will.

II. The will, that commanding faculty, which sometimes was faithful, and ruled with God, is now turned traitor, and rules with and for the devil. God planted it in man "wholly a right seed;" but now it is "turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine." It was originally placed in a due subordination to the will of God, as was shown before; but now it is gone wholly aside. However some do magnify the power of free-will, a view of the spirituality of the law, to which acts of moral discipline do in no ways answer, and a deep sight into the corruption of nature, given by the inward operation of the Spirit, convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment, would make men find an absolute need of the power of free grace, to remove the bands of wickedness from off their free-will. To open up this

plague of the heart, I offer these following things to be considered:—

1. There is, in the unrenewed will, an utter inability for what is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God. The natural man's will is in Satan's fetters; hemmed in within the circle of evil, and cannot move beyond it, more than a dead man can rise himself out of his grave. We deny him not a power to choose, pursue, and act, what on the matter is good; but though he can will what is good and right, he can will nothing aright and well. "Without me ye can do nothing;" to wit, nothing truly and spiritually good. His very choice and desire of spiritual things is carnal and selfish: "Ye seek me—because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." He not only comes not to Christ, but he cannot come. And what can one do acceptable to God, who believeth not on him whom the Father hath sent? To evidence this inability for good in the unregenerate, consider these two things:—

Evidence 1. How often does the light so shine before men's eyes, that they cannot but see the good they should choose, and the evil they should refuse; and yet their hearts have no more power to comply with that light, than if they were arrested by some invisible hand? They see what is right, yet they follow, and cannot but follow what is wrong. Their consciences tell them the right way, and approve of it too; yet cannot their will be brought up to it; their corruption so chains them, that they cannot embrace it; so they sigh, and go backward, over the belly of their light. And if it be not thus, how is it that the word and way of holiness meet with such

entertainment in the world? How is it that clear arguments and reason on the side of piety and a holy life, which bear in themselves even on the carnal mind, do not bring men over to that side? Although the being of a heaven and a hell were but a may-be, it were sufficient to determine the will to the choice of holiness, were it capable to be determined thereto by mere reason; but men, “knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” And how is it that those who magnify the power of free-will, do not confirm their opinion before the world by an ocular demonstration, in a practice as far above others in holiness as the opinion of their natural ability is above that of others? Or is it maintained only for protection of lusts, which men may hold fast as long as they please, and, when they have no more use for them, can throw them off in a moment, and leap out of Delilah’s lap into Abraham’s bosom? Whatever use some make of that principle, it does of itself, and in its own nature, cast a broad shadow for a shelter to wickedness of heart and life. And it may be observed, that the generality of the hearers of the gospel, of all denominations, are plagued with it; for it is a root of bitterness natural to all men, from whence do spring so much fearlessness about the soul’s eternal state, so many delays and off-puts in that weighty matter, whereby much work is laid up for a death-bed by some; while others are ruined by a legal walk, and unacquaintedness with the life of faith, and the making use of Christ for sanctification, all flowing from the

persuasion of sufficient natural abilities. So agreeable is it to corrupt nature.

Evid. 2. Let those who, by the power of the spirit of bondage, have had the law laid out before them in its spirituality, for their conviction, speak and tell if they found themselves able to incline their hearts towards it in that case; nay, if the more that light shone into their souls, they did not find their hearts more and more unable to comply with it. There are some, who have been brought unto "the place of the breaking forth," who are yet in the devil's camp, that from their experience can tell, that light let into the mind cannot give life to the will, to enable it to comply therewith; and could give their testimony here if they would. But take Paul's testimony concerning it, who, in his unconverted state, was far from believing his utter inability for good: but learned it by experience: (Rom. vii.) I own the natural man may have a kind of love to the law: but he looks on the holy law in a carnal dress; for as yet he sees it not in its spirituality; if he did, he would find it the very reverse of his own nature, and what his will could not fall in with till changed by the power of grace.

2. There is in the unrenewed will an averseness to good. Sin is the natural man's element; he is as loath to part with it, as the fishes are to come out of the water into dry land. He not only cannot come to Christ, but he will not come. "Wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?" He is sick, but utterly averse to the remedy: he loves his disease so, that he loathes the physician. He is a captive, a prisoner, and a slave; but he loves his

conqueror, his jailer, and master; he is fond of his fetters, prison, and drudgery, and has no liking to his liberty. For evidence of this averseness to good in the will of man, I shall instance in some particulars.

Evidence 1. The untowardness of children. Do we not see them naturally lovers of sinful liberty? How unwilling are they to be hedged in! how averse to restraint! The world can bear witness, that they are as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke: and more, that it is far easier to bring young bullocks tamely to bear the yoke, than to bring young children under discipline, and make them tamely submit to the restraint of sinful liberty. Every body may see in this, as in a glass, that man is naturally wild and wilful: “Man is born like a wild ass’s colt.” What can be said more? He is like a colt: “A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure: in her occasion who can turn her away?”

Evid. 2. What pain and difficulty do men often find in bringing their hearts to religious duties! and what a task is it to the carnal heart to abide at them! It is a pain to it, to leave the world but a little, to converse with God. It is not easy to borrow time from the many things, to bestow upon “the one thing needful.” Men often go to God in duties, with their faces towards the world; and when their bodies are on the mount of ordinances, their hearts will be found at the foot of the hill, “going after their covetousness.” They are soon wearied of well-doing: for holy duties are not agreeable to their corrupt nature. Take notice of them at their worldly business, set them down with their carnal company,

or let them be sucking the breasts of lust; time seems to them to fly, and drive furiously, so that it is gone ere they are aware. But how heavily does it drive, while a prayer, a sermon, or a Sabbath lasts! The Lord's day is the longest day of all the week with many; and therefore they must sleep longer that morning, and go sooner to bed that night, than ordinarily they do, that the day may be made of a tolerable length: for their hearts say within them, "When will the Sabbath be gone?" The hours of worship are the longest hours of that day; hence, when duty is over, they are like men eased of a burden.

Evid. 3. Consider how the will of the natural man doth "rebel against the light." Light sometimes entereth in, because he is not able to hold it out: but he "loveth darkness rather than light." Sometimes, by the force of truth, the outer door of the understanding is broken up; but the inner door of the will remains fast bolted. Then lusts rise against light: corruption and conscience encounter, and fight as in the field of battle, till corruption getting the upper hand, conscience is forced to give back; convictions are murdered, and truth is made and held prisoner, so that it can create no more disturbance. While the word is preached or read, or the rod of God is upon the natural man, sometimes convictions are darted in on him, and his spirit is wounded, in greater or lesser measure: but these convictions not being able to make him fall, he runs away with the arrows sticking in his conscience; and at length, one way or other, gets them out, and licks himself whole again. Thus, while the light

shines, men, naturally averse to it, wilfully shut their eyes, till God is provoked to blind them judicially, and they become proof against the word and providences too: so they may go where they will, they can sit at ease; there is never a word from heaven to them, that goeth deeper than into their ears. “ Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.”

Evid. 4. Let us observe the resistance made by elect souls, when the Spirit of the Lord is at work, to bring them from “ the power of Satan unto God.” Zion’s King gets no subjects but by stroke of sword, “ in the day of his power.” None come to him, but such as are drawn by a divine hand. When the Lord comes to the soul, he finds the strong man keeping the house, and a deep peace and security there, while the soul is fast asleep in the devil’s arms. But “ the prey must be taken from the mighty, and the captive delivered.” Therefore the Lord awakens the sinner, opens his eyes, and strikes him with terror, while the clouds are black above his head, and the sword of vengeance is held to his breast. Now he is at no small pains to put a fair face on a black heart: to shake off his fears, to make head against them, and to divert himself from thinking on the unpleasant and ungrateful subject of his soul’s case. If he cannot so rid himself from them, carnal reason is called in to help, and urgeth, that there is no ground for so great fear; all may be well enough yet; and if it be ill with him, it will be ill with many. When the sinner is beat from this, and sees no advantage in going to hell with company, he resolves to leave his sins, but cannot think of breaking off so soon; there is time

enough, and he will do it afterwards. Conscience says, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts:" but he cries, "To-morrow, Lord, to-morrow, Lord;" and "Just now, Lord," till that now is never like to come. And thus, many times, he comes from his prayers and confessions, with nothing but a breast full of sharper convictions; for the heart doth not always cast up the sweet morsel, as soon as confession is made with the mouth, Judges x. 10—16. And when conscience obligeth them to part with some lusts, others are kept as right eyes and right hands; and there are rueful looks after those that are put away; as it was with the Israelites, who, with bitter hearts, did remember the fish they did "eat in Egypt freely." Nay, when he is so pressed that he must needs say before the Lord, that he is content to part with all his idols; the heart will be giving the tongue the lie. In a word, the soul, in this case, will shift from one thing to another, like a fish with the hook in his jaws, till it can do no more, and power come to make it succumb, as "the wild ass in her month."

3. There is in the will of man a natural proneness to evil, a woful bent towards sin. Men naturally are "bent to backsliding from God." Set holiness and life upon the one side, sin and death upon the other, and leave the unrenewed will to itself: it will choose sin, and reject holiness. This is no more to be doubted, than that water, poured on the side of a hill, will run downward and not upward, or that a flame will ascend and not descend.

Evidence 1. Is not the way of evil the first way the children of men do go? Do not their inclina-

tions plainly appear on the wrong side, while yet they have no cunning to hide them? As soon as it appears we are reasonable creatures, it appears we are sinful creatures. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born." "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child: but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Folly is bound in the heart, it is woven into our very nature. The knot will not loose, it must be broke asunder by strokes. Words will not do it, the rod must be taken to drive it away: and if it be not driven far away, the heart and it will meet and knit again. Not that the rod of itself will do this: the sad experience of many parents testifies the contrary; and Solomon himself tells you, "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him;" it is so bound in his heart. But the rod is an ordinance of God, appointed for that end; which, like the word, is made effectual by the Spirit's accompanying his own ordinance. And this by the way shows, that parents, in administering correction to their children, have need, first of all, to correct their own irregular passions, and look upon it as a matter of awful solemnity, setting about it with much dependence on the Lord, and following it with prayer for the blessing, if they would have it effectual.

Evid. 2. How easily are men led aside to sin! The children, who are not persuaded to good, are otherwise simple ones, easily wrought upon; those whom the word cannot draw to holiness, are led by Satan at his pleasure. Profane Esau, that cunning man, was as easily cheated of the blessing, as if he

had been a fool or an idiot. The more natural a thing is, it is the more easy: so Christ's yoke is easy to the saints, in so far as they are partakers of the divine nature: and sin is easy to the unrenewed man; but to learn to do good, is as difficult as for the Ethiopian to change his skin; because the will naturally hangs towards evil, but is averse to good. A child can cause a round thing to run, while he cannot move a square thing of the same weight; for the roundness makes it fit for the motion, so that it goes with a touch. Even so, when men find the heart easily carried towards sin, while it is a dead weight in the way of holiness; we must bring the reason of this from the natural set and disposition of the heart, whereby it is prone and bent to evil. Were man's will, naturally, but in an equal balance to good and evil, the one might be embraced with as little difficulty as the other; but experience testifies it is not so. In the sacred history of the Israelites, especially in the book of Judges, how often do we find them forsaking Jehovah, the mighty God, and doting upon the idols of the nations about them! But did ever one of these nations grow fond of Israel's God, and forsake their own idols? No, no; though man is naturally given to changes, it is but from evil to evil, not from evil to good: "Hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods? But my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit." Surely the will of man stands not in equal balance, but has a cast to the wrong side.

Evid. 3. Consider how men go on still in the way of sin, till they meet with a stop, and that from

another hand than their own: "I hid me, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." If God withdraw his restraining hand, and lay the reins on the sinner's neck, he is in no doubt what way to choose; for (observe it) the way of sin is the way of his heart; his heart naturally lies that way; he hath a natural propensity to sin. As long as God suffereth them, they walk in their own way. The natural man is so fixed in his woful choice, that there needs no more to show he is off from God's way, but to tell he is upon his own.

Evid. 4. Whatever good impressions are made upon him, they do not last. Though his heart be firm as a stone, yea, harder than the nether millstone, in point of receiving them, it is unstable as water, and cannot keep them. It works against the receiving of them; and, when they are made, it works them off, and returns to its natural bias: "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." The morning cloud promiseth a hearty shower; but when the sun ariseth, it evanisheth: the sun beats upon the early dew, and it evaporates. Such is the goodness of the natural man. Some sharp affliction, or piercing conviction, obligeth him, in some sort, to turn from his evil course: but his will not being renewed, religion is still against the grain with him, and therefore this goes off again. Unrenewed men return to the wallowing in the mire; because, although they were washed, yet their swinish nature was not changed. It is hard to cause wet wood take fire, hard to make it keep fire; but it is harder than either of these to

make the unrenewed will retain goodness: which is a plain evidence of the natural bent of the will to evil.

Evid. 5. Do the saints serve the Lord now, as they were wont to serve sin in their unconverted state? Very far from it: “When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.” Sin got all, and admitted no partner; but now, when they are the servants of Christ, are they free from sin? Nay, there are still with them some deeds of the old man, showing that he is but dying in them. And hence their hearts often misgive them, and slip aside unto evil when they would do good. They need to watch, and keep their hearts with all diligence; and their sad experience teacheth them, that “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.” If it be thus in the green tree, how must it be in the dry?

4. There is a natural contrariety, direct opposition and enmity, in the will of man to God himself and his holy will: “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” The will was once God’s deputy in the soul, set to command there for him; but now it is set up against him. If you would have the picture of it in its natural state, the very reverse of the will of God represents it. If the fruit hanging before one’s eyes be but forbidden, that is sufficient to draw the heart after it. Let me instance in the sin of profane swearing and cursing, to which some are so abandoned that they take a pride in them; belching out horrid oaths and curses, as if hell opened with the opening of their mouths; and all this without any manner of provocation, though even that could not excuse

them. Pray tell me, (1.) What profit is there here? A thief gets something in his hands for his pains, a drunkard gets a belly-full; but what do ye get? Others serve the devil for pay; but ye are volunteers, that expect no reward but your work itself, in affronting heaven. And if you repent not, you will get your reward in full tale: when ye go to hell, your work will follow you. The drunkard shall not have a drop of water to cool his tongue there; nor will the covetous man's wealth follow him into the other world: but ye shall drive on your old trade there. And an eternity will be long enough to give you your heart's fill of it. (2.) What pleasure is there here, but what flows from your trampling upon the holy law? Which of your senses doth swearing or cursing gratify? If it gratify your ears, it can only be by the noise it makes against the heavens. Though you had a mind to give up yourselves to all manner of profanity and sensuality, there is so little pleasure can be strained out of these sins, that we must needs conclude your love to them, in this case, is a love to them for themselves; a devilish unhired love, without any prospect of profit or pleasure from them otherwise. If any shall say, 'These are monsters of men.' Be it so: yet, alas! the world is fruitful of such monsters; they are to be found almost every where. And allow me to say, they must be admitted as the mouth of the whole unregenerate world against heaven, "whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

I have a charge against every unregenerate man and woman, to be verified by the testimony of the Scriptures of truth, and the testimony of their own consciences; namely, that whether they be professors or profane, seeing they are not born again, they are heart-enemies to God, to the Son of God, to the Spirit of God, and to the law of God. Hear this, ye careless souls, that live at ease in your natural state.

1. Ye are enemies to God in your minds. Ye are not as yet reconciled to him; the natural enmity is not as yet slain, though perhaps it lies hid, and ye do not perceive it. (1.) Ye are enemies to the very being of God: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." The proud man would that none were above himself; the rebel, that there was no king; and the unrenewed man, who is a mass of pride and rebellion, that there were no God. He saith it in his heart, he wisheth it were so, though he be ashamed and afraid to speak it out. And that all natural men are such fools, appears from the apostle's quoting a part of this psalm, "that every mouth may be stopped." (Rom. iii.) I own, indeed, that while the natural man looks on God as the Creator and Preserver of the world, because he loves his own self, therefore his heart riseth not against the being of his Benefactor: but this enmity will quickly appear when he looks on God as the Rector and Judge of the world, binding him under the pain of the curse to exact holiness, and girding him with the cords of death, because of sin. Listen in this case to the voice of the heart, and thou wilt find it to be, 'No God.' (2.) Ye are enemies to the nature of God: "They

say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Every natural man is an enemy to God, as he is revealed in his word. An infinitely holy, just, powerful, and true Being, is not the God whom he loves, but the God whom he loathes. In effect, men naturally are haters of God: and if they could, they certainly would make him another than what he is. For consider, it is a certain truth, that whatsoever is in God, is God; and therefore his attributes or perfections are not any thing really distinct from himself. If God's attributes be not himself, he is a compound being, and so not the first Being; for the parts compounding are before the compound itself: but he is "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last."

Now upon this I would, for your conviction, propose to your consciences a few queries:—(1.) How stand your hearts affected to the infinite purity and holiness of God? Conscience will give an answer to this, which the tongue will not speak out. If ye be not partakers of his holiness, ye cannot be reconciled to it. The pagans, finding they could not be like God in holiness, made their gods like themselves in filthiness; and thereby discovered what sort of a god the natural man would have. God is holy: can an unholy creature love his unspotted holiness? Nay, it is the righteous only that can "give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." God is light: can creatures of darkness rejoice therein? Nay, "every one that doeth evil hateth the light;" for "what communion hath light with darkness?" (2.) How stand your hearts affected to the justice of God? There is not a man who is wedded to his lusts, as all

the unregenerate are, but would be content, with the blood of his body, to blot that letter out of the name of God. Can the malefactor love his condemning judge? or an unjustified sinner a just God? No, he cannot: “To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” Hence, seeing men cannot get the doctrine of his justice blotted out of the Bible, yet it is such an eye-sore to them that they strive to blot it out of their minds; and they ruin themselves by presuming on his mercy, while they are not careful to get a righteousness wherein they may stand before his justice, but “say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.” (3.) How stand you affected to the omniscience and omnipresence of God? Men naturally would rather have a blind idol than an all-seeing God; and therefore do what they can, as Adam did, to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord. They no more love an all-seeing, every-where present God, than the thief loves to have the judge witness to his evil deeds. If it could be carried by votes, God would be voted out of the world, and closed up in heaven; for the language of the carnal heart is, “The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.” (4.) How stand you affected to the truth and veracity of God? There are but few in the world that can heartily subscribe to that sentence of the apostle—“Let God be true, but every man a liar.” Nay, truly, there are many who, in effect, do hope that God will not be true to his word. There are thousands who hear the gospel that hope to be saved, and think all safe with them for eternity, who never had any experience of the new birth, nor do at all

concern themselves in that question, whether they are born again or not?—a question that is like to wear out from among us this day. Our Lord's words are plain and peremptory: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What are such hopes, then, but real hopes that God will recal his word, and that Christ will prove a false prophet? What else means the sinner, who, "when he heareth the words of the curse, blesseth himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart?" Lastly, How stand you affected to the power of God? None but new creatures will love him for it, on a fair view thereof; though others may slavishly fear him upon account of it. On these grounds, I declare every unrenewed man an enemy to God.

2. Ye are enemies to the Son of God. That enmity of Christ is in your hearts, which would have made you join the husbandmen who killed the heir, and cast him out of the vineyard, if ye had been beset with their temptations, and no more restrained than they were. 'Am I a dog, (you will say,) to have so treated my sweet Saviour?' So said Hazeael in another case; but, when he had the temptation, he was a dog to do it. Many call Christ their sweet Saviour, whose consciences can bear witness, they never enjoyed so much sweetness in him as in their sweet lusts, which are ten times sweeter to them than their Saviour. He is no other way sweet to them, than as they abuse his death and sufferings for the peaceable enjoyment of their lusts; that they may live as they list in the world, and, when they die, may be kept out of hell. Alas! it is

but a mistaken Christ that is sweet to you whose souls loathe that Christ, who “is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.” It is with you as it was with the carnal Jews, who delighted in him while they mistook his errand into the world, fancying that he would be a temporal deliverer to them. But when he was come, and “sat as a refiner and purifier of silver,” and cast them out as reprobate silver, who thought to have had no small honour in the kingdom of the Messiah, his doctrine galled their consciences, and they rested not till they had imbrued their hands in his blood. To open your eyes in this point, which you are so loath to believe, I will lay before you the enmity of your hearts against Christ and all his offices.

I. Every unregenerate man is an enemy to Christ in his prophetic office. He is appointed of the Father the great prophet and teacher; but when he came he was condemned as a seducer and blasphemer. For evidence of this enmity, I shall instance two things:—

Evidence 1. Consider the entertainment he meets with, when he comes to teach souls inwardly by his Spirit. Men do what they can to stop their ears, like the deaf adder, that they may not hear his voice. They always resist the Holy Ghost: “they desire not the knowledge of his ways;” and therefore bid him depart from them. The old calumny is often raised upon him—“He is mad; why hear ye him?” Soul-exercise, raised by the spirit of bondage, is accounted by many nothing else but distraction and melancholy fits: men thus blaspheming the Lord’s work, because they themselves are beside themselves, and cannot judge of those matters.

Evid. 2. Consider the entertainment he meets with, when he comes to teach men outwardly by his word.

(1.) His written word, the Bible, is slighted. Christ hath left it to us, as the book of our instructions, to show us what way we must steer our course, if we would come to Emmanuel's land. It is a lamp to light us through a dark world to eternal light. And he hath left it upon us, to search it with that diligence wherewith men dig into mines for silver or gold. But, ah ! how is this sacred treasure profaned by many ! They ridicule that holy word by which they must be judged at the last day ; and will rather lose their souls than their jest, dressing up the conceits of their wanton wits in scripture phrases. Many exhaust their spirits in reading romances, and their minds pursue them as the flame doth the dry stubble ; while they have no heart for, nor relish of the holy word, and therefore seldom take a Bible in their hands. What is agreeable to the vanity of their minds is pleasant ; but what recommends holiness to their unholy hearts, makes their spirits dull and flat. What pleasure will they find in reading a profane ballad or story-book, to whom the Bible is tasteless as the white of an egg ! Many lay by their Bibles with their Sabbath-day's clothes ; and, whatever use they have for their clothes, they have none for their Bibles till the return of the Sabbath. Alas ! the dust or finery about your Bibles is a witness now, and will at the last day be a witness, of the enmity of your hearts against Christ as a prophet. Besides all this, among those who ordinarily read the Scriptures, how few are there that read it as the word of

the Lord to their souls, and keep up communion with him in it! They do not make his statutes their counsellors, nor doth their particular case send them to their Bibles. They are strangers to the solid comfort of the Scriptures. And if at any time they be dejected, it is something else than the word that revives them; as Ahab was cured of his sullen fit by the securing of Naboth's vineyard for him.

(2.) Christ's word preached is despised. The entertainment most of the world to whom it has come have always given it, is, "they made light of it." And, for its sake, they are despised whom he has employed to preach it, whatever other face men put upon their contempt of the ministry. "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake." But though the earthen vessels, wherein God has put the treasure, be turned with many into vessels wherein there is no pleasure, yet why is the treasure itself slighted? But slighted it is, and that with a witness this day. 'Lord, who hath believed our report? to whom shall we speak?' Men can, without remorse, make to themselves silent Sabbaths one after another. And, alas! when they come to ordinances, for the most part, it is but to appear before the Lord, and to tread his courts; namely, as a company of beasts would do, if they were driven into them. So little reverence and awe of God appears on their spirits. Many stand like brazen walls before the word, in whose corrupt conversation the preaching of the word makes no breach. Nay, not

a few are growing worse and worse, under precept upon precept; and the result of all is, "they go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken."

What tears of blood are sufficient to lament that the gospel, the grace of God, is thus received in vain! We are but the voice of one crying; the speaker is in heaven, and speaks to you from heaven by men: why do ye refuse him that speaketh? God has made our Master heir of all things, and we are sent to court a spouse for him. There is none so worthy as he, none more unworthy than they to whom this match is proposed; but the prince of darkness is preferred before the Prince of peace. A dismal darkness overclouded the world by Adam's fall, more terrible than if the sun, moon, and stars, had been for ever wrapt up in blackness of darkness: and there we should have eternally lain, had not this grace of the gospel, as a shining sun, appeared to dispel it. But yet we fly like night-owls from it, and, like the wild beasts, lay ourselves down in our dens; when the sun ariseth we are struck blind with the light thereof, and, as creatures of darkness, love darkness rather than light. Such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Christ in his prophetic office.

II. The natural man is an enemy to Christ in his priestly office. He is appointed of the Father a priest for ever; that, by his alone sacrifice and intercession, sinners may have peace with and access to God: but Christ crucified is a stumbling-block and foolishness to the unrenewed part of mankind to whom he is preached. They are not for him, as the new and living way; nor is he, by the voice of the world, "a high priest over the house of God." Corrupt nature goes quite another way to work.

Evidence 1. None of Adam's children naturally incline to receive the blessing in borrowed robes, but would always owe all to themselves: for they "desire to be under the law," and "go about to establish their own righteousness." Man naturally looks on God as a great master, and himself as his servant, that must work and win heaven as his wages. Hence, when conscience is awakened, he thinks that, to the end he may be saved, he must answer the demands of the law, serve God as well as he can, and pray for mercy wherein he comes short. And thus many come to duties, that never come out of them to Jesus Christ.

Evid. 2. As men naturally think highly of their duties, that seem to them to be well done, so they look for acceptance with God according as their work is done, not according to the share they have in the blood of Christ. "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?" They will value themselves on their performances and attainments, yea, their very opinions in religion; taking to themselves what they rob from Christ the great High Priest.

Evid. 3. The natural man going to God in duties, will always be found either to go without a mediator, or with more than the one only mediator, Jesus Christ. Nature is blind, and therefore ventures: it sets men a-going immediately to God without Christ; to rush into his presence, and put their petitions in his hand, without being introduced by the secretary of heaven, or putting their requests into his hand. So fixed is this disposition in the unrenewed heart, that when many hearers of the

gospel are conversed with upon the point of their hopes of salvation, the name of Christ will scarcely be heard from their mouths. Ask them how they think to obtain the pardon of sin? They will tell you, they beg and look for mercy, because God is a merciful God; and that is all they have to confide in. Others look for mercy for Christ's sake; but how do they know that Christ will take their plea in hand? Why, as the papists have their mediators with the Mediator, so have they. They know he cannot but do it; for they pray, confess, mourn, and have great desires, and the like; and so have something of their own to commend them unto him: they were never made poor in spirit, and brought empty-handed to Christ, to lay the stress of all on his atoning blood.

III. The natural man is an enemy to Christ in his kingly office. The Father has appointed the Mediator king in Zion. And all to whom the gospel comes are commanded, on their highest peril, to "kiss the Son," and submit themselves unto him. But the natural voice of mankind is, "Away with him;"—"they will not have him to reign over them."

Evidence 1. The workings of corrupt nature to wrest the government out of his hands. No sooner was he born, but being born a king, Herod persecuted him. And when he was crucified, they "set up over his head his accusation written, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Though his kingdom be a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world, yet they cannot allow him a kingdom within a kingdom, which acknowledgeth no other head or supreme, but the royal Mediator. They make bold with his royal

prerogatives, changing his laws, institutions, and ordinances; modelling his worship according to the devices of their own hearts, introducing new offices and officers into his kingdom, not to be found in "the book of the manner of his kingdom;" disposing of the external government thereof, as may best suit their carnal designs. Such is the enmity of the hearts of men against Zion's king.

Evid. 2. How unwilling are men, naturally, to submit unto, and be hedged in by, the laws and discipline of his kingdom! As a king, he is a law-giver, and has appointed an external government, discipline, and censures, to control the unruly, and to keep his professed subjects in order, to be exercised by officers of his own appointment. But these are the great eye-sores of the carnal world, who love sinful liberty, and therefore cry out, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." Hence this work is found to be, in a special manner, a striving against the stream of corrupt nature, which, for the most part, puts such a face on the church, as if there were no king in Israel, every one doing that which is right in his own eyes.

Evid. 3. However natural men may be brought to feign submission to the King of saints, yet lusts always retain the throne and dominion in their hearts, and they are serving "divers lusts and pleasures." None but these in whom Christ is formed, do really put the crown on his head, and receive the kingdom of Christ within them. His crown is "the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals." Who are they, whom the power of grace has not subdued, that will allow him to set up,

and to put down in their souls, as he will? Nay, as for others, any lord shall sooner get the rule over them than the Lord of glory: they kindly entertain his enemies, but will never absolutely resign themselves to his government, till conquered in a day of power. Thus ye may see, that the natural man is an enemy to Jesus Christ in all his offices.

But O how hard is it to convince men in this point! And, in a special manner, the enmity of the heart against Christ in his priestly office seems to be hid from the view of most of the hearers of the gospel. Yet there appears to be a peculiar malignity in corrupt nature against that office of his. It may be observed, that the Socinians, those enemies of our blessed Lord, allow him to be properly a prophet and a king, but deny him to be properly a priest. And this is agreeable enough to the corruption of our nature; for, under the covenant of works, the Lord was known as a prophet or teacher, and also as a king or ruler, but not at all as a priest: so man knows nothing of the mystery of Christ as the way to the Father, till it be revealed to him; and when it is revealed, the will riseth up against it; for corrupt nature lies cross to the mystery of Christ, and the great contrivance of salvation, through a crucified Saviour, revealed in the gospel. For clearing of which weighty truth, let these four things be considered:—

1. The soul's falling in with the grand device of salvation by Jesus Christ, and setting the matters of salvation on that footing before the Lord, is declared by the Scriptures of truth to be an undoubted mark of a real saint, who is happy here, and shall be happy

hereafter. “ And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.” “ But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” “ For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Now, how could this be, if nature could comply with that grand device?

2. Corrupt nature is the very reverse of the gospel contrivance. In the gospel, God promiseth Jesus Christ as the great means of re-uniting man to himself: he has named him as the Mediator, one “in whom he is well pleased,” and will have none but him, but nature “will have none of him.” God appointed the place of meeting for the reconciliation, namely, the flesh of Christ; accordingly, “God was in Christ” as the tabernacle of meeting, to make up the peace with sinners; but natural men, though they should die for ever, will not come thither: “And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” In the way of the gospel, the sinner must stand before the Lord in an imputed righteousness; but corrupt nature is for an inherent righteousness: and therefore, so far as natural men follow after righteousness, they follow after “the law of righteousness,” and not after “the Lord our righteousness.” Nature is always for building up itself, and to have some ground for boasting; but the great design of the gospel is to exalt grace, to depress nature, and exclude boasting. The sum of our natural religion is, to do good from and for ourselves; the sum of the

gospel religion is, to deny ourselves, and to do good from and for Christ.

3. Every thing in nature is against believing in Jesus Christ. What beauty can the blind mind discern in a crucified Saviour, for which he is to be desired? How can the will, naturally impotent, yea, and averse to good, make choice of him? Well may the soul then say to him in the day of the spiritual siege, as the Jebusites said to David in another case, "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither." The way of nature is to go into one's self for all; according to the fundamental maxim of unsanctified morality, that a man should trust in himself; which, according to the doctrine of faith, is mere foolishness: for so it is determined, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Now faith is the soul's going out of itself for all: and this, nature, on the other hand, determines to be foolishness. Wherefore there is need of the working of mighty power, to cause sinners to believe. We see the promises of welcome to sinners, in the gospel covenant, are ample, large, and free, clogged with no conditions. If they cannot believe his bare word, he has given them his oath upon it; and, for their greater assurance, he has appended seals to his sworn covenant; namely, the holy sacraments; so that no more could be demanded of the most faithless person in the world to make us believe him, than the Lord has condescended to give us to make us believe himself. This plainly speaks nature to be against believing, and those who flee to Christ for a refuge to have need of strong consolation, to balance their strong doubts and propensity to unbelief. Far-

ther, also, it may be observed, how, in the word sent to a secure, graceless generation, their objections are answered beforehand; and words of grace are heaped one upon another, as ye may read, Isa. lv. 7, 8, 9. Joel ii. 13. Why? Because the Lord knows, that when those secure sinners are thoroughly awakened, doubts, fears, and carnal reasonings against believing, will rise within their breasts as thick as dust in a house, raised by sweeping a dry floor.

Lastly, Corrupt nature is bent towards the way of the law, or covenant of works; and every natural man, so far as he sets himself to seek after salvation, is engaged in that way; and will not quit it, till driven from it by a divine power. Now the way of salvation by works, and that of free grace in Jesus Christ, are inconsistent: “And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.” “And the law is not of faith; but, the man that doeth them shall live in them.” Wherefore, if the will of man naturally incline to the way of salvation by the law, it lies cross to the gospel contrivance. And that such is the natural bent of our hearts, will appear, if these following things be considered:—

1. The law was Adam’s covenant; and he knew no other, as he was the head and representative of all mankind, that were brought into it with him, and left under it by him, though without strength to perform the condition thereof. Hence, this covenant is ingrained in our nature; and though we have lost our father’s strength, yet we still incline to the way he was set upon, as our head and representative, in

that covenant; that is, by doing, to live. This is our natural religion, and the principle which men naturally take for granted, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

2. Consider the opposition that has always been made in the world against the doctrine of free grace in Jesus Christ, by men setting up for the way of works; thereby discovering the natural tendency of the heart. It is manifest, that the great design of the gospel contrivance is to exalt the free grace of God in Jesus Christ: "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." All gospel truths centre in Christ; so that to learn the truth, is to learn Christ; and to be truly taught it, is to be taught as the truth is in Jesus. All dispensations of grace and favour from heaven, whether to nations or particular persons, have still had something about them proclaiming a freedom of grace; as in the very first separation made by the divine favour, Cain the elder brother is rejected, and Abel the younger accepted. This shines through the whole history of the Bible; but as true as it is, this has been the point principally opposed by corrupt nature. One may well say, that of all errors in religion, since Christ the seed of the woman was preached, this of works, in opposition to free grace in him, was the first that lived; and, it is likely, will be the last that dies. There have been vast numbers of errors, which sprung up one after another; whereof, at length, the world became ashamed and weary, so that they died out: but this has continued from Cain, the first author of this heresy, unto this day; and never wanted some that clave to it, even in the times of greatest light. I do

not, without ground, call Cain the author of it. When Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, a bloody offering of the firstlings of his flock, (like the publican smiting on his breast, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner,") Cain advanced with his thank-offering of the fruit of the ground, like the proud Pharisee, with his, "God, I thank thee." For what was the cause of Cain's wrath, and of his murdering of Abel? was it not, that he was not accepted of God for his work? "And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous;" that is, done in faith, and accepted, when his were done without faith, and therefore rejected. And so he wrote his indignation against justification and acceptance with God through faith, in opposition to works, in the blood of his brother; to convey it down to posterity. And since that time, the unbloody sacrifice has often swimm'd in the blood of those that rejected it. The promise made to Abraham, of the seed in which all nations should be blessed, was so overclouded among his posterity in Egypt, that the generality of them saw no need of that way of obtaining the blessing, till God himself confuted their error by a fiery law from mount Sinai, which was added "because of transgressions, till the seed should come." I need not insist to tell you, how Moses and the prophets had still much ado to lead the people off the conceit of their own righteousness. The ninth chapter of Deuteronomy is entirely spent on that purpose. They were very gross in that point in our Saviour's time: in the time of the apostles, when the doctrine of free grace was most clearly preached, that error lifted up its head in

the face of clearest light;—witness the epistles to the Romans and Galatians. And since that time it has not been wanting: Popery being the common sink of former heresies, and the heart and life of that delusion. And finally, it may be observed, that always as the church declined from her purity otherwise, the doctrine of free grace was obscured proportionably.

3. Such is the natural propensity of man's heart to the way of the law, in opposition to Christ, that, as the tainted vessel turns the taste of the purest liquor put into it, so the natural man turns the very gospel into law, and transforms the covenant of grace into a covenant of works. The ceremonial law was to the Jews a real gospel; which held blood, death, and translation of guilt before their eyes continually, as the only way of salvation: yet their very table (that is, their altar, with the several ordinances pertaining thereto,) “was a snare unto them,” while they use it to make up the defects in their obedience to the moral law, and cleave to it so, as to reject him whom the altar and sacrifices pointed them to, as the substance of all: even as Hagar, whose it was only to serve, was by their father brought into her mistress's bed; not without a mystery in the purpose of God, “for these are the two covenants.” Thus is the doctrine of the gospel corrupted by Papists, and other enemies to the doctrine of free grace. And, indeed, however natural men's heads may be set right in this point, as surely as they are out of Christ, their faith, repentance, and obedience, such as they are, are placed by them in the room of Christ and his righteousness, and so trusted to, as if by these they fulfilled a new law.

4. Great is the difficulty in Adam's sons of their parting with the law, as a covenant of works. None part with it in that respect, but those whom the power of the Spirit of grace separates from it. The law is our first husband, and gets every one's virgin love. When Christ comes to the soul, he finds it married to the law, so as it neither can, nor will be married to another, till it be obliged to part with the first husband. Now, that ye may see what sort of a parting this is, consider,

(1.) It is a death. Entreaties will not prevail with the soul here: it saith to the first husband, as Ruth to Naomi, "The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." And here sinners are true to their word: they die to the law, ere they be married to Christ. Death is hard to every body: but what difficulty do ye imagine must a loving wife, on her death-bed, find in parting with her husband, the husband of her youth, and with the dear children she has brought forth to him? The law is that husband: all the duties performed by the natural man are these children. What a struggle, as for life, will be in the heart ere they be got parted. I may have occasion to touch upon this afterwards. In the mean time, take the apostle's short but pithy description of it, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." They go about to establish it, to make it stand: their righteousness is like a house built upon the sand; yet it cannot stand, but they will have it to stand: it falls, they set it up again; but still it tumbles down on

them; yet they cease not to go about to make it stand. But wherefore all this pains about a tottering righteousness? Because, such as it is, it is their own. What ails them at Christ's righteousness? Why, that would make them free grace's debtors for all, and that is what the proud heart by no means can submit to. Here lies the stress of the matter: "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek," that is, in other terms, "He cannot dig, and to beg he is ashamed." Such is the struggle ere the soul die to the law. But what speaks yet more of this woful disposition of the heart, nature oft times gets the mastery of the disease; insomuch that the soul, which was like to have died to the law, while convictions were sharp and piercing, fatally recovers of the happy and promising sickness: and, what is very natural, cleaves more closely than ever to the law, even as a wife brought back from the gates of death would cleave to her husband. This is the issue of the exercises of many about their soul's case; they are indeed brought to follow duties more closely: but they are as far from Christ as ever, if not farther.

(2.) It is a violent death. "Ye are become dead to the law," being killed, slain, or put to death, as the word bears. The law itself has a great hand in this; the husband gives the wound: "I through the law am dead to the law." The soul that dies this death, is like a loving wife matched with a rigorous husband: she does what she can to please him, yet he is never pleased; but tosseth, harasseth, and beats her, till she breaks her heart, and death sets her free. Thus it is made evident,

that men's hearts are naturally bent to the way of the law, and lie cross to the gospel contrivance: and the second article of the charge against you that are unregenerate, is verified; namely, that ye are enemies to the Son of God.

3. Ye are enemies to the Spirit of God. He is the Spirit of holiness: the natural man is unholy, and loves to be so, and therefore "resists the Holy Ghost." The work of the Spirit is to convince the world of "sin, righteousness, and judgment." But O how do men strive to ward off these convictions, as ever they would ward off a blow, threatening the loss of a right eye, or a right hand! If the Spirit of the Lord dart them in, so that they cannot avoid them, the heart says, in effect, as Ahab to Elijah, whom he both hated and feared, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" And indeed they treat him as an enemy, doing their utmost to stifle convictions, and to murder these harbingers that come to prepare the Lord's way into the soul. Some fill their hands with business, to put their convictions out of their heads, as Cain, who set about building a city; some put them off with delays and fair promises, as Felix did; some will sport them away in company, and some sleep them away. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification; whose work is to subdue lusts, and burn up corruption: how then can the natural man, whose lusts are to him as his limbs, yea, as his life, fail of being an enemy to him?

Lastly, Ye are enemies to the law of God. Though the natural man desires to be under the law, as a covenant of works, choosing that way of salvation in opposition to the mystery of Christ; yet, as

it is a rule of life, requiring universal holiness, and discharging all manner of impurity, he is an enemy to it: "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." For, (1.) There is no unrenewed man who is not wedded to some one lust or other, which his heart can by no means part with. Now that he cannot bring up his inclinations to the holy law, he would fain have the law brought down to his inclinations: a plain evidence of the enmity of the heart against it. And therefore, "to delight in the law of God after the inward man," is proposed in the word as a mark of a gracious soul. It is from this natural enmity of the heart against the law, that all the pharisaical glosses upon it have arisen; whereby the commandment, which in itself is exceeding broad, has been made very narrow, to the intent it might be more agreeable to the natural disposition of the heart. (2.) The law laid home to the natural conscience, in its spirituality, irritates corruption. The nearer it comes, nature riseth the more against it. In that case it is as oil to the fire, which, instead of quenching it, makes it flame the more: "When the commandment came, sin revived," says the apostle. What reason can be assigned for this, but the natural enmity of the heart against the holy law? Unmortified corruption, the more it is opposed, the more it rageth. Let us conclude then, that the unregenerate are heart-enemies to God, his Son, his Spirit, and his law; that there is a natural contrariety, opposition, and enmity in the will of man to God himself, and his holy will.

5. There is, in the will of man, contumacy against the Lord. Man's will is naturally wilful in an evil

course; he will have his will, though it should ruin him: it is with him, as with the leviathan, "Darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of a spear." The Lord calls to him by his word, says to him, (as Paul to the jailer, when he was about to kill himself,) "Do thyself no harm:" sinner, "Why will ye die?" But they will not hearken, "Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." We have a promise of life, in form of a command: "Keep my commandments, and live:" it speaks impenitent sinners to be self-destroyers, wilful self-murderers. They transgress the command of living; as if one's servant should wilfully starve himself to death, or greedily drink up a cup of poison, which his master commands him to forbear: even so do they; they will not live, they will die: "All they that hate me, love death." O what a heart is this! It is a stony heart, hard and inflexible as a stone: mercies melt it not, judgments break it not; yet it will break ere it bow. It is an insensible heart: though there be upon the sinner a weight of sin, which makes the earth to stagger; although there is a weight of wrath on him, which makes the devils to tremble, yet he goes lightly under the burden; he feels not the weight more than a stone, till the Spirit of the Lord quickens him so far as to feel it.

Lastly, The unrenewed will is wholly perverse, in reference to man's chief and highest end. The natural man's chief end is not his God, but himself. Man is a mere relative, dependent, borrowed being; he has no being nor goodness originally from himself; but all he hath is from God, as the first cause.

and spring of all perfection, natural or moral: dependence is woven into his very nature: so that if God should totally withdraw from him, he would dwindle into a mere nothing. Seeing then whatever man is, he is of him; surely in whatever he is, he should be to him; as the waters which come from the sea, do of course return thither again. And thus man was created, directly looking to God, as his chief end: but falling into sin, he fell off from God, and turned into himself; and like a traitor usurping the throne, he gathers in the rents of the crown to himself. Now, this infers a total apostacy, and universal corruption in man; for where the chief and last end is changed, there can be no goodness there. This is the case of all men in their natural state: "The Lord looked down—to see if there were any that did—seek God. They are all gone aside," to wit, from God; they seek not God, but themselves. And though many fair shreds of morality are to be found amongst them, yet "there is none that doeth good, no, not one;" for though some of them run well, they are still off the way; they never aim at the right mark. They are "lovers of their own selves—more than God." Wherefore Jesus Christ, having come into the world to bring men back to God again, came to bring them out of themselves in the first place. The godly groan under the remains of this woful disposition of the heart: they acknowledge it, and set themselves against it, in its subtle and dangerous insinuations. The unregenerate, though most insensible of it, are under the power thereof; and whithersoever they turn themselves, they cannot move without the circle of self;

they seek themselves, they act for themselves: their natural, civil, and religious actions, from whatever spring they come, do all run into, and meet in the dead sea of self.

Most men are so far from making God their chief end in their natural and civil actions, that in these matters God is not in all their thoughts. Their eating and drinking, and such like natural actions, are for themselves; their own pleasure or necessity, without any higher end: "Did ye not eat for yourselves?" They have no eye to the glory of God in these things, as they ought to have. They do not eat and drink to keep up their bodies for the Lord's service; neither do those drops of sweetness God has put into the creature, raise up their souls towards that ocean of delights that is in the Creator. But it is self, and not God, that is sought in them by natural men. And what are the unrenewed man's civil actions, such as buying, selling, working, &c. but fruit to himself? So marrying, and giving in marriage, are reckoned amongst the sins of the old world; for they had no eye to God therein to please him; but all they had in view was to please themselves. Finally, self is naturally men's highest end in their religious actions. They perform duties for a name, or for some other worldly interest. Or if they be more refined, it is their peace, and at most their salvation from hell and wrath, or their own eternal happiness, that is their chief and highest end. Their eyes are held that they see not the glory of God. They seek God indeed, but not for himself, but for themselves. They seek him not at all, but for their own welfare: so their whole life is

woven into one web of practical blasphemy; making God the means, and self their end, yea, their chief end.

And thus have I given you some rude draughts of man's will in his natural state, drawn by Scripture and men's own experience. Call it no more Naomi, but Marah; for bitter it is, and a root of bitterness. Call it no more free-will, but slavish lust; free to evil, but free from good, till regenerating grace loose the bands of wickedness. Now, since all must be wrong, and nothing can be right, where the understanding and will are so corrupt, I shall briefly despatch what remains, as following, of course, on the corruption of those prime faculties of the soul.

The Corruption of the Affections, the Conscience, and the Memory. The Body partaker of this Corruption.

III. The affections are corrupted. The unrenewed man's affections are wholly disordered and distempered; they are as the unruly horse, that either will not receive, or violently runs away with the rider. So man's heart naturally is a mother of abominations: "For from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness," &c. The natural man's affections are wretchedly misplaced; he is a spiritual monster. His heart is, where his feet should be, fixed on the earth; his heels are lifted up against heaven, which his heart should be set on. His face is towards hell, his back towards heaven; and therefore God calls him to turn. He loves what he should hate, and hates what he should love; joys in what

he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in; glorieth in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory; abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor. They hit the point indeed, (as Caiaphas did in another case,) who cried out against the apostles, as men that “turned the world upside down;” for that is the work the gospel has to do in the world, where sin has put all things so out of order, that heaven lies under, and earth a-top. If the unrenewed man’s affections be set on lawful objects, then they are either excessive or defective. Spiritual things have always too little of them. In a word, they are always in, or over; never right, only evil.

Now here is a threefold cord against heaven and holiness, not easily broken; a blind mind, a perverse will, and disorderly, distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says, The man should not stoop: the will, opposite to the will of God, says, He will not: and the corrupt affections, rising against the Lord, in defence of the corrupt will, say, He shall not. Thus the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, till a day of power come, in which he is made a new creature.

IV. The conscience is corrupt and defiled. It is an evil eye, that fills one’s conversation with much darkness and confusion, being naturally unable to do its office: till the Lord, by letting in new light to the soul, awaken the conscience, it remains sleepy and inactive. Conscience can never do its work, but according to the light it hath to work by. Wherefore, seeing the natural man cannot spiritually discern spiritual things, the conscience, naturally, is quite

useless in that point; being cast into such a deep sleep, that nothing but a saving illumination from the Lord can set it on work in that matter. The light of the natural conscience in good and evil, sin and duty, is very defective; therefore, though it may check for grosser sins, yet as to the more subtile workings of sin, it cannot check them, because it discerns them not. Thus conscience will fly in the face of many, if at any time they be drunk, swear, neglect prayer, or be guilty of any gross sin; who otherwise have a profound peace, though they live in the sin of unbelief, are strangers to spiritual worship, and the life of faith. And natural light being but faint and languishing in many things which it doth not reach, conscience in that case shoots like a stitch in one's side, which quickly goes off: its incitements to duty, and checks for and struggles against sin, are very remiss, which the natural man easily gets over. But because there is a false light in the dark mind, the natural conscience following the same, will call evil good, and good evil: "Whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service." When the natural conscience is awakened by the spirit of conviction, it will indeed rage and roar, and put the whole man in a dreadful consternation; awfully summon all the powers of the soul to help in a strait; make the stiff heart to tremble, and the knees to bow; set the eyes a weeping, the tongue a confessing; and oblige the man to cast out the goods into the sea, which he apprehends are like to sink the ship of the soul, though the heart still goes after them. But yet it is an evil conscience, which naturally leads to despair, and will do it effectually, as in Judas' case; unless either

lusts prevail over it, to lull it asleep, as in the case of Felix, or the blood of Christ prevail over it, sprinkling and purging it from dead works, as in the case of all true converts.

V. Even the memory bears evident marks of this corruption. What is good and worthy to be remembered, as it makes but slender impression, so that impression easily wears off; the memory, as a leaking vessel, lets it slip. As a sieve that is full when in the water, lets all go when it is taken out; so is the memory, with respect to spiritual things: but how does it retain what ought to be forgotten? Naughty things so bear in themselves upon it, that though men would fain have them out of mind, yet they stick there like glue. However forgetful men be in other things, it is hard to forget an injury. So the memory often furnishes new fuel to old lusts; makes men in old age re-act the sins of their youth, while it presents them again to the mind with delight. And thus it is like the sieve, that lets through the pure grain and keeps the refuse. Thus far of the corruption of the soul.

VI. The body itself also is partaker of this corruption and defilement, so far as it is capable thereof. Wherefore the Scripture calls it *sinful flesh*. We may take this up in two things:—(1.) 'The natural temper, or rather distemper of the bodies of Adam's children, as it is an effect of original sin, so it hath a natural tendency to sin, incites to sin, leads the soul into snares, yea, is itself a snare to the soul. The body is a furious beast, of such metal, that if it be not beat down, "kept under, and brought into subjection," it will cast the soul into much sin and misery.

There is a vileness in the body, which, as to the saints, will never be removed, until it be melted down in the grave, and cast into a new mould, at the resurrection, to come forth a spiritual body; and will never be carried off from the bodies of those who are not partakers of the resurrection to life. (2.) Its members are instruments or weapons of unrighteousness, whereby men fight against God. The eyes and ears are open doors, by which impure motions and sinful desires enter the soul: "The tongue is a world of iniquity, an unruly evil, full of deadly poison;" by it the impure heart vents a great deal of its filthiness. "The throat is an open sepulchre." The feet run the devil's errands. The belly is made a god, not only by drunkards and riotous livers, but by every natural man. So the body naturally is an agent for the devil, and a magazine of armour against the Lord.

To conclude: Man by nature is wholly corrupted: "From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in him." And as in a dung-hill every part contributes to the corruption of the whole; so the natural man, while in that state, grows still worse and worse: the soul is made worse by the body, and the body by the soul; and every faculty of the soul serves to corrupt another more and more. Thus much for the second general head.

How Man's Nature was Corrupted.

THIRDLY, I shall show how man's nature comes to be thus corrupted. The heathens perceived that man's nature was corrupted; but how sin had entered, they could not tell. But the Scripture is very plain in that point: "By one man sin entered into

the world"—“by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” Adam’s sin corrupted man’s nature, and leavened the whole lump of mankind. The root was poisoned, and so the branches were envenomed; the vine turned into the vine of Sodom, and so the grapes became grapes of gall. Adam, by his sin, became not only guilty, but corrupt; and so transmits guilt and corruption to his posterity. By his sin he stripped himself of his original righteousness, and corrupted himself. We were in him representatively, being represented by him as our moral head in the covenant of works; we were in him seminally, as our natural head: hence we fell in him, and by his disobedience were made sinners; as Levi, in the loins of Abraham, paid tithes. His first sin is imputed to us; therefore justly are we left under the want of his original righteousness, which, being given to him as a common person, cast off by his sin: and this is necessarily followed, in him and us, by the corruption of the whole nature; righteousness and corruption being two contraries, one of which must needs always be in man, as a subject capable thereof. And Adam, our common father, being corrupt, we are so too; for “who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?”

Although it is sufficient to evince the righteousness of this dispensation, that it was from the Lord, who doeth all things well; yet, to silence the murmurings of proud nature, let these few things further be considered:—(1.) In the covenant wherein Adam represented us, eternal happiness was promised to him and his posterity, upon condition of his, that is, Adam’s perfect obedience, as the representative for

all mankind: whereas, if there had been no covenant, they could not have pleaded eternal life upon their most perfect obedience, but might have been, after all, reduced to nothing; notwithstanding, by natural justice, they would have been liable to God's eternal wrath, in case of sin. Who, in that case, would not have consented to that representation? (2.) Adam had a power to stand given him, being made upright. He was as capable to stand for himself, and all his posterity, as any after him could be for themselves. This trial of mankind in their head would soon have been over, and the crown won to them all, had he stood: whereas, had his posterity been independent of him, and every one left to act for himself, the trial would have been continually a carrying on, as men came into the world. (3.) He had natural affections the strongest to engage him, being our common father. (4.) His own stock was in the ship, his all lay at stake, as well as ours. He had no separate interest from ours; but if he forgot ours, he behooved to have forgot his own. (5.) If he had stood, we should have had the light of his mind, the righteousness of his will, and holiness of his affections, with entire purity transmitted unto us: we could not have fallen; the crown of glory, by his obedience, would have been for ever secured to him and his. This is evident from the nature of a federal representation: and no reason can be given why, seeing we are lost by Adam's sin, we should not have been saved by his obedience. On the other hand, it is reasonable, that he falling, we should with him bear the loss. Lastly, Such as quarrel with this dispensation must renounce their part in Christ; for we are

no otherwise made sinners by Adam than we are made righteous by Christ, from whom we have both imputed and inherent righteousness. We no more made choice of the second Adam for our head and representative in the second covenant, than we did of the first Adam in the first covenant.

Let none wonder that such a horrible change should be brought on by one sin of our first parents; for thereby they turned away from God as their chief end, which necessarily infers a universal depravation. Their sin was a complication of evils, a total apostacy from God, a violation of the whole law: by it they broke all the ten commands at once:—(1.) They chose new gods. They made their belly their god, by their sensuality; self their god, by their ambition; yea, and the devil their god, by believing him, and disbelieving their Maker. (2.) Though they received, yet they observed not that ordinance of God, about the forbidden fruit. They contemned that ordinance so plainly enjoined them, and would needs carve out to themselves how to serve the Lord. (3.) They took the name of the Lord their God in vain; despising his attributes, his justice, truth, power, &c. They grossly profaned the sacramental tree; abused his word, by not giving credit to it; abused that creature of his, which they should not have touched; and violently misconstrued his providence, as if God, by forbidding them that tree, had been standing in the way of their happiness; and therefore he suffered them not to escape his righteous judgment. (4.) They remembered not the Sabbath to keep it holy, but put themselves out of a condition to serve God aright on his own day; nei-

ther kept they that state of holy rest wherein God had put them. (5.) They cast off their relative duties: Eve forgets herself, and acts without advice of her husband, to the ruin of both; Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation, and confirms her in her wickedness. They forgot all duty to their posterity. They honoured not their Father in heaven; and therefore their days were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them. (6.) They ruined themselves, and all their posterity. (7.) Gave themselves up to luxury and sensuality. (8.) Took away what was not their own, against the express will of the great owner. (9.) They bore false witness, and lied against the Lord, before angels, devils, and one another; in effect giving out that they were hardly dealt by, and that heaven grudged their happiness. (10.) They were discontent with their lot, and coveted an evil covetousness to their house; which ruined both them and theirs. Thus was the image of God on man defaced all at once.

The Doctrine of the Corruption of Nature applied.

USE I.—For information. Is man's nature wholly corrupted? Then,

1. No wonder that the grave open its devouring mouth for us as soon as the womb has cast us forth; for we are all, in a spiritual sense, dead-born; yea, and filthy. Let us not complain of the miseries we are exposed to at our entrance into, nor of the continuance of them while we are in the world. Here is the venom that has poisoned all the springs of earthly enjoyments we have to drink of. It is the corrup-

tion of man's nature that brings forth all the miseries of human life in churches, states, families, and in men's souls and bodies.

2. Behold here, as in a glass, the spring of all the wickedness, profanity, and formality in the world; the source of all the disorders in thy own heart and life. Every thing acts like itself, agreeable to its own nature; and so corrupt man acts corruptly. You need not wonder at the sinfulness of your own heart and life, nor at the sinfulness and perverseness of others: if a man be crooked, he cannot but halt; and if the clock be set wrong, how can it point the hour right?

3. See here why sin is so pleasant, and religion such a burden to carnal spirits: sin is natural, holiness not so. A swine, brought into a palace, would get away again to wallow in the mire; and corrupt nature tends ever to impurity.

4. Learn from this the nature and necessity of regeneration. First, This discovers the nature of regeneration, in these two things:—(1.) It is not a partial, but a total change, though imperfect in this life. Thy whole nature is corrupted, and therefore the cure must go through every part. Regeneration makes not only a new head for knowledge, but a new heart and new affections for holiness: “All things become new.” If one, having received many wounds, should be cured of them all save one only, he might bleed to death by that one as well as a thousand; so, if the change go not through the whole man, it is naught. (2.) It is not a change made by human industry, but by the mighty power of the Spirit of God. A man must be “born of the Spirit.” The change

brought upon men by good education, or forced upon them by a natural conscience, though it may pass among men for a saving change, it is not so; for our nature is corrupt, and none but the God of nature can change it. Though a gardener, ingrafting a pear branch into an apple tree, may make the apple tree bear pears, yet the art of man cannot change the nature of the apple tree; so one may pin a new life to his old heart, but he can never change the heart. Secondly, This also shows the necessity of regeneration. It is absolutely necessary in order to salvation: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." No unclean thing can enter the New Jerusalem; but thou art wholly unclean, while in thy natural state. If every member of thy body were disjointed, each joint behooved to be loosed ere the members could be set right again. This is the case of thy soul; and therefore thou must be born again, else thou shalt never see heaven, unless it be afar off, as the rich man in hell did. Deceive not thyself; no mercy of God, no blood of Christ, will bring thee to heaven in thy unregenerate state: for God will never open a fountain of mercy to wash away his own holiness and truth; nor did Christ shed his precious blood to blot out the truths of God, or to overturn God's measures about the salvation of sinners. Heaven! what would ye do there that are not born again—ye that are no ways fitted for Christ the head? That would be a strange sight! A holy head, and members wholly corrupt! a head full of treasures of grace, and members wherein are nothing but treasures of wickedness! a head obedient to the death, and heels kicking against heaven!

Ye are no ways adapted to the society above, more than beasts for converse with men. Thou art a hater of true holiness; and, at the first sight of a saint there, wouldst cry out, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Nay, the unrenewed man, if it were possible he could go to heaven in that state, he would no otherwise go to it than now he comes to the duties of holiness—that is, leaving his heart behind him.

Use II.—For lamentation. Well may we lament thy case, O natural man! for it is the saddest case one can be in out of hell. It is time to lament for thee; for thou art dead already, dead while thou livest: thou carriest about with thee a dead soul in a living body; and, because thou art dead, thou canst not lament thy own case. Thou art loathsome in the sight of God; for thou art altogether corrupt. Thou hast no good in thee; thy soul is a mass of darkness, rebellion, and vileness before the Lord. Thou thinkest, perhaps, that thou hast a good heart to God, good inclinations, and good desires; but God knows there is nothing good in thee, but "every imagination of thine heart is only evil." Thou canst do no good; thou canst do nothing but sin. For,

1. Thou art the servant of sin, and therefore free from righteousness. Whatever righteousness be, (poor soul!) thou art free of it; thou dost not, thou canst not meddle with it. Thou art under the dominion of sin, a dominion where righteousness can have no place. Thou art a child and servant of the devil, seeing thou art yet in the state of nature: "Ye are of your father the devil." And, to prevent

any mistake, consider that sin and Satan have two sorts of servants: (1.) There are some employed, as it were, in coarser work: those bear the devil's mark on their foreheads, having no form of godliness; but are profane, grossly ignorant, mere moralists, not so much as performing the external duties of religion, but living in the view of the world as sons of earth, only minding earthly things. (2.) There are some employed in a more refined sort of service to sin, who carry the devil's mark in their right hand, which they can and do hide from the view of the world. These are close hypocrites, who sacrifice as much to the corrupt mind as the other to the flesh. These are ruined by a more indiscernible trade of sin: pride, unbelief, self-seeking, and the like, swarm in, and prey upon their corrupted, wholly corrupted souls. Both are servants of the same house; the latter as far as the former from righteousness.

2. How is it possible thou shouldst be able to do any good, thou whose nature is wholly corrupt? Can fruit grow where there is no root? or can there be an effect without a cause? "Can the fig-tree bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?" If thy nature be wholly corrupt, as indeed it is, all thou dost is certainly so too; for no effect can exceed the virtue of its cause. "Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?"

Ah! what a miserable spectacle is he that can do nothing but sin! Thou art the man, whosoever thou art, that art yet in thy natural state. Hear, O sinner, what is thy case.

1. Innumerable sins compass thee about; mountains of guilt are lying upon thee; floods of impurities overwhelm thee; living lusts of all sorts roll up

and down in the dead sea of thy soul, where no good can breathe, because of the corruption there. Thy lips are unclean; the opening of thy mouth is as the opening of an unripe grave, full of stench and rottenness: "Their throat is an open sepulchre." Thy natural actions are sin: for "when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" Thy civil actions are sin: "The ploughing of the wicked is sin." Thy religious actions are sin: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." The thoughts and imaginations of the heart are only evil. A deed may be soon done, a word soon spoken, a thought swiftly passeth through the heart; but each of these is an item in thy accounts. O sad reckoning! as many thoughts, words, actions; as many sins. The longer thou livest, thy accounts swell the more. Should a tear be dropped for every sin, thine head behooved to be waters, and thine eyes a fountain of tears; for nothing but sin comes from thee. Thy heart frames nothing but evil imaginations: there is nothing in thy life but what is framed by thine heart; and therefore there is nothing in thy heart or life, but evil.

2. All thy religion, if thou hast any, is lost labour, as to acceptance with God, or any saving effect to thyself. Art thou yet in thy natural state? Truly then thy duties are sins, as was just now hinted. Would not the best wine be loathsome in "a vessel wherein there is no pleasure?" So is the religion of an unregenerate man. Under the law, the garment which the flesh of the sacrifice was carried in, though it touched other things, did not make

them holy; but he that was unclean touching any thing, whether common or sacred, made it unclean. Even so thy duties cannot make thy corrupt soul holy, though they in themselves be good; but thy corrupt heart defiles them, and makes them unclean. Thou wast wont to divide thy works into two sorts; some good, some evil: but thou must count again, and put them all under one head; for God writes on them all, only evil. This is lamentable. It will be no wonder to see those beg in harvest who fold their hands to sleep in seed-time; but to be labouring with others in the spring, and yet have nothing to reap when the harvest comes, is a very sad case; and will be the case of all professors living and dying in their natural state.

3. Thou canst not help thyself. What canst thou do to take away thy sin, who art wholly corrupt? Nothing, truly, but sin. If a natural man begin to relent, drop a tear for his sin, and reform, presently the corrupt heart apprehends, at least, a merit of congruity; he has done much himself, (he thinks,) and God cannot but do more for him on that account. In the mean time he does nothing but sin; so that the congruous merit is, that the leper be put out of the camp, the dead soul buried out of sight, and the corrupt lump cast into the pit. Thou art poor indeed, extremely miserable and poor. Thou hast no shelter, but a refuge of lies; no garment for thy soul, but filthy rags; nothing to nourish it, but husks that cannot satisfy. More than that, thou hast got such a bruise in the loins of Adam, which is not yet cured, that thou art without strength, unable to do or work for thyself; nay, more than all

this, thou canst not so much as seek aright, “but liest helpless, as an infant exposed in the open field.”

USE III.—I exhort you to believe this sad truth. Alas! it is evident it is very little believed in the world. Few are concerned to get their corrupt conversation changed; but fewer, by far, to get their nature changed. Most men know not what they are, nor what spirits they are of: they are as the eye, which, seeing many things, never sees itself. But, until you know, every one, the plague of his own heart, there is no hope of your recovery. Why will you not believe it? You have plain Scripture testimony for it; but you are loath to entertain such an ill opinion of yourselves. Alas! that is the nature of your disease: “Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Lord, open their eyes to see it, before they die of it, and in hell lift up their eyes, and see what they will not see now!

I shall close this weighty point of the corruption of man’s nature, with a few words to another doctrine from the text.

DOCTRINE, *God takes special notice of our natural corruption, or the sin of our nature.* This he testifies two ways: 1. By his word, as in the text; “God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually.” 2. By his works. God writes his particular notice of it, and displeasure with it, as in many of his works, so especially in these two:—

1. In the death of the infant children of men. Many miseries they have been exposed to; they

were drowned in the deluge, consumed in Sodom by fire and brimstone; they have been slain with the sword, dashed against the stones, and are still dying ordinary deaths. What is the true cause of this? On what ground doth a holy God thus pursue them? Is it the sin of their parents? That may be the occasion of the Lord's raising the process against them; but it must be their own sin that is the ground of the sentence passing on them: for "the soul that sinneth it shall die," saith God. Is it their own actual sin? They have none. But as men do with toads and serpents, which they kill at first sight, before they have done any hurt, because of their venomous nature; so it is in this case.

2. In the birth of the elect children of God. When the Lord is about to change their nature, he makes the sin of their nature lie heavy on their spirits. When he means to let out their corruption, the lance gets full depth in their souls, reaching to the root of sin. The flesh, or corruption of nature, is pierced, being crucified, as well as "the affections and lusts."

USE.—Let us then have a special eye upon the corruption and sin of our nature. God sees it: O that we saw it too, and that sin were ever before us! What avails it to notice other sins, while this mother sin is unnoticed? Turn your eyes inward to the sin of your nature. It is to be feared, many have this work to begin yet; that they have shut the door, while the grand thief is yet in the house undiscovered. This is a weighty point; and, in handling of it,

I. I shall, for conviction, point at some evidences

of men's overlooking the sin of their nature, which yet the Lord takes particular notice of. (1.) Men's looking on themselves with such confidence, as if they were in no hazard of gross sins. Many would take it very heinously to get such a caution as Christ gave his apostles: "Take heed of surfeiting and drunkenness." If any should suppose them to break out in gross abominations, they would be ready to say, "Am I a dog?" It would raise the pride of their hearts, but not their fear and trembling, because they know not the corruption of their nature. (2.) Untenderness towards those that fall. Many, in that case, cast off all bowels of Christian compassion; for they do not consider themselves, lest they also be tempted. Men's passions are often highest against the faults of others, when sin sleeps soundly in their own hearts. Even good David, when he was at his worst, was most violent against the faults of others. While his conscience was asleep under his guilt, in the matter of Uriah, the Spirit of the Lord takes notice, that his "anger was greatly kindled against the man," in the parable. And, on good grounds, it is thought it was at the same time that he treated the Ammonites so cruelly, as is related, "putting them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and making them pass through the brick-kiln." Grace makes men zealous against sin in others, as well as in themselves; but eyes turned inward to the corruption of nature, clothe them with pity and compassion, and fill them with thankfulness to the Lord, that they themselves were not the persons left to be such spectacles of human frailty. (3.) There are not a few, who, if

they be kept from afflictions in worldly things, and from gross outbreakings in their conversation, know not what it is to have a sad heart. If they meet with a cross, which their proud hearts cannot stoop to bear, they will be ready to say, ‘O to be gone!’ but the corruption of their nature never makes them long for heaven. Lusts, scandalously breaking out at a time, will mar their peace; but the sin of their nature never makes them a heavy heart. (4.) Delaying of repentance, in hopes to set about it afterwards. Many have their own appointed time for repentance and reformation; as if they were such complete masters over their lusts, that they can allow them to gather more strength, and yet overcome them. They take up resolutions to amend, without an eye to Jesus Christ, union with him, and strength from him; a plain evidence they are strangers to themselves: and so they are left to themselves, and their flourishing resolutions wither; for as they see not the necessity, so they get not the benefit of the dew from heaven to water them. (5.) Men’s venturing frankly on temptations, and promising liberally on their own heads. They cast themselves fearlessly into temptation, in confidence of their coming off fairly: but were they sensible of the corruption of their nature, they would beware of entering on the devil’s ground; as one girt about with bags of gunpowder, would be loath to walk where sparks of fire are flying, lest he should be blown up. Self-jalousy well becomes Christians: “Lord, is it I?” They that know the deceit of their bow, will not be very confident that they shall hit the mark. (6.) Unacquaintedness with heart-plagues. The know-

ledge of the plagues of the heart, is a rare qualification. There are indeed some of them written in such great characters, that he who runs may read them; but there are others more subtle, which few do discern. How few are there to whom the bias of the heart to unbelief is a burden? nay, they perceive it not. Many have had sharp convictions of other sins, that were never to this day convinced of their unbelief; though that is the sin specially aimed at in a thorough conviction: "He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me." A disposition to establish our own righteousness, is a weed that naturally grows in every man's heart; but few sweat at the plucking of it up: it lurks undiscovered. The bias of the heart to the way of the covenant of works, is a hidden plague of the heart to many. All the difficulty they find is, in getting up their hearts to duties: they find no difficulty in getting their hearts off them, and over them, to Jesus Christ. How hard is it to bring men off from their own righteousness? yea, it is very hard to convince them of their leaning to it at all. Lastly, Pride and self-conceit. A view of the corruption of nature would be very humbling, and oblige him that has it to reckon himself the chief of sinners. Under greatest attainments and enlargements, it would be ballast to his heart, and hide pride from his eyes. The want of thorough humiliation, piercing to the sin of one's nature, is the ruin of many professors: for digging deep makes great difference betwixt "wise and foolish builders."

II. I will lay before you a few things, in which ye should have a special eye to the sin of your na-

ture. (1.) Have a special eye to it in your application to Jesus Christ. Do you find any need of Christ, which sends you to him as the Physician of souls? O forget not this disease when ye are with the Physician! They never yet knew well their errand to Christ, that went not to him for the sin of their nature; for his blood to take away the guilt of it, and his Spirit to break the power of it. Though, in the bitterness of your souls, you should lay before him a catalogue of your sins of omission and commission, which might reach from earth to heaven; yet, if the sin of your nature were wanting in it, assure yourselves you have forgot the best part of the errand a poor sinner has to the Physician of souls. What would it have availed the people of Jericho, to have set before Elisha all the vessels in their city full of "the water that was naught," if they had not led him forth to the spring, to cast in the salt there? The application is easy. (2.) Have a special eye to it in your repentance, whether additional or progressive; in your first repentance, and in the renewing of your repentance afterwards. Though a man be sick, there is no fear of death if the sickness strike not to his heart; and there is as little fear of the death of sin, as long as the sin of our nature is not touched. But if you would repent indeed, let the stream lead you up to the fountain; and mourn over your corrupt nature as the cause of all sin in heart, lip, and life: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.—Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (3.) Have a special eye upon it in your mortification: "And they that are Christ's

have crucified the flesh." It is the root of bitterness that must be struck at, which the axe of mortification must be laid to, else we labour in vain. In vain do men go about to purge the streams, while they are at no pains about the muddy fountain: it is vain religion to attempt to make the life truly good, while the corruption of nature still retains its ancient vigour, and the power of it is not broken. Lastly, You are to eye it in your daily walk. He that would walk aright, must have one eye upward to Jesus Christ, and another inward to the corruption of his own nature. It is not enough that we look about us; we must also look within us. There our greatest enemy lies; and there are grounds for daily watching and mourning.

III. I shall offer some reasons why we should especially notice the sin of our nature.

1. Because of all sins it is the most extensive and diffusive. It goes through the whole man, and spoils all. Other sins mar particular parts of the image of God; but this doth at once deface the whole. A disease affecting any particular member of the body is ill; but that which affects the whole is worse. The corruption of nature is the poison of the old serpent cast into the fountain of action; and so infects every action, every breathing of the soul.

2. It is the cause of all particular lusts, and actual sins, in our hearts and lives. "Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries," &c. It is the bitter fountain: particular lusts are but rivulets running from it; which bring forth unto the life a part only, and not the whole of what is within. Now, the fountain is still above the streams: so

where the water is good, it is best in the fountain ; where it is ill, it is worst there. The corruption of nature being that which defiles all, itself must needs be the most abominable thing.

3. It is virtually all sin : for it is the seed of all sins, which want but the occasion to set up their heads ; being in the corruption of nature, as the effect in the virtue of its cause. Hence it is called “ a body of death,” as consisting of the several members belonging to such a body of sins, whose life lies in spiritual death. It is the cursed ground, fit to bring forth all manner of noxious weeds. As the whole nest of venomous creatures must needs be more dreadful than any few of them that come creeping forth ; so the sin of thy nature, that mother of abominations, must be worse than any particular lusts that appear stirring in thy heart and life. Never did every sin appear in the conversation of the vilest wretch that ever lived ; but look thou into the corrupt nature, and there thou mayest see all and every sin in the seed and root thereof. There is a fulness of all unrighteousness there. There is atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, and whatsoever is vile. Possibly none of these appear to thee in thy heart ; but there is more in that unfathomable depth of wickedness than thou knowest. Thy corrupt heart is like an ant’s nest, on which, while the stone lieth, none of them appear ; but take off the stone and stir them up ; you will see what a swarm is there, and how lively they be. Just such a sight would thy heart afford thee, did the Lord but withdraw the restraint he has upon it, and suffer Satan to stir it up by temptation.

4. The sin of our nature is of all sins the most fixed and abiding. Sinful actions, though the guilt and stain of them may remain, yet in themselves they are passing. The drunkard is not always at his cups, nor the unclean person always acting lewdness. But the corruption of nature is an abiding sin; it remains with men in its full power, by night and by day, at all times, fixed as with bands of iron and brass, till their nature be changed by converting grace; and the remains of it continue with the godly, until the death of the body. Pride, envy, covetousness, and the like, are not always stirring in thee; but the proud, envious, carnal nature is still with thee.

5. It is the great reigning sin. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." There are three things you may observe in the corrupt heart: (1.) There is the corrupt nature; the corrupt set of the heart, whereby men are unapt for all good, and fitted for all evil. This the apostle here calls, sin which reigns. (2.) There are particular lusts, or dispositions of that corrupt nature, which the apostle calls "the lusts thereof;" such as pride, covetousness, &c. (3.) There is one among these, which is like Saul among the people, higher by far than the rest, namely, "the sin which doth so easily beset us." This we usually call the predominant sin; because it doth, as it were, reign over other particular lusts, so that other lusts must yield to it. These three are like a river which divides itself into many streams, whereof one is greater than the rest. The corruption of nature is the river head, which has many par-

ticular lusts in which it runs ; but it mainly disburdens itself into what is commonly called one's predominant sin. Now all of these being fed by the sin of our nature, it is evident that sin is the great reigning sin, which never loseth its superiority over particular lusts that live and die with it, and by it. But, as in some rivers, the main stream runs not always in one and the same channel ; so particular predominants may be changed, as lust in youth may be succeeded by covetousness in old age. Now, what doth it avail to reform in other things, while the great reigning sin remains in its full power ? What though some particular lust be broken ? If that sin, the sin of our nature, keep the throne, it will set up another in its stead : as when a water-course is stopped in one place, while the fountain is not dammed up, it will stream forth another way. And thus some cast off their prodigality, but covetousness comes up in its stead : some cast away their profanity, and the corruption of nature sends not its main stream that way as before ; but it runs in another channel, namely, in that of a legal disposition, self-righteousness, or the like. So that people are ruined by their not eyeing the sin of their nature.

Lastly, It is a hereditary evil. " In sin did my mother conceive me." Particular lusts are not so, but in virtue of their cause. A prodigal father may have a frugal son ; but this disease is necessarily propagated in nature, and therefore hardest to cure. Surely then the word should be given out against this sin, as against the king of Israel : " Fight neither with small nor great, save only with this : " for this sin being broke, all other sins are broken with it ; and while it stands entire, there is no victory.

IV. That you may get a view of the corruption of your nature, I would recommend to you three things: (1.) Study to know the spirituality and extent of the law of God, for that is the glass wherein you may see yourselves. (2.) Observe your hearts at all times, but especially under temptation. Temptation is a fire that brings up the scum of the vile heart: do you carefully mark the first risings of corruption. Lastly, Go to God, through Jesus Christ, for illumination by his Spirit. Lay out your soul before the Lord, as willing to know the vileness of your nature: say unto him, "That which I know not, teach thou me;" and be willing to take in light from the word. Believe, and you shall see. It is by the word the Spirit teacheth: but, without the Spirit's teaching, all other teaching will be to little purpose. Though the gospel should shine about you, like the sun at noon-day, and this great truth be ever so plainly preached; you will never see yourselves aright, until the Spirit of the Lord light his candle within your breast. The fulness and glory of Christ, the corruption and vileness of our nature, are never rightly learned, but where the Spirit of Christ is the teacher.

And now, to close this weighty point, let the consideration of what is said commend Christ to you all. Ye that are brought out of your natural state of corruption unto Christ, be humble; still coming to Christ, and improving your union with him to the further weakening of the remains of this natural corruption. Is your nature changed? It is but in part so. The day was you could not stir: now you are cured; but remember the cure is not yet perfected,

you still go halting. And, though it were better with you than it is, the remembrance of what you were by nature should keep you low. You that are yet in your natural state, take with it: believe the corruption of your nature, and let Christ and his grace be precious in your eyes. O that you would at length be serious about the state of your souls! You must die; you must appear before the judgment-seat of God. Will you lie down and sleep another night at ease in this case? Do it not; for before another day you may be sisted before God's dreadful tribunal, in the grave-clothes of your corrupt state; and your vile souls cast into the pit of destruction as a corrupt lump, to be for ever buried out of God's sight. For I testify unto you all, there is no peace with God, no pardon, no heaven for you, in this state: there is but a step betwixt you and eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord: if the brittle thread of your life, which may be broke with a touch ere you are aware, be indeed broken while you are in this stste, you are ruined for ever, and without remedy. But come speedily to Jesus Christ; he has cleansed as vile souls as yours; and he will yet "cleanse the blood that he hath not cleansed." Thus far of the sinfulness of man's natural state.

HEAD II.

THE MISERY OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE.

EPHESIANS ii. 3.

“ We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

HAVING showed you the sinfulness of man's natural state, I come now to lay before you the misery of it. A sinful state cannot be but a miserable state. If sin go before, wrath follows of course. Corruption and destruction are so knit together, that the Holy Ghost calls destruction, even eternal destruction, corruption: “ He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption,” that is, everlasting destruction; as is clear from its being opposed to life everlasting in the following clause. And so the apostle having shown the Ephesians their real state by nature, to wit, that they were dead in sins and trespasses, altogether corrupt; he tells them, in the words of the text, their relative state, namely, that the pit was digged for them while in that state of corruption: being dead in sins, they “ were by nature children of wrath, even as others.”

In these words we have four things:—

1. The misery of a natural state: it is a state of wrath, as well as a state of sin. We were, says the apostle, children of wrath, bound over and liable to the wrath of God; under wrath in some measure; and, in wrath, bound over to more, even the full measure of it in hell, where the floods of it go over

the prisoners for ever. The natural man is a child of wrath, a son of death. He is a malefactor, dead in law, lying in chains of guilt: a criminal held fast in his fetters till the day of execution; which will not fail, unless a pardon be obtained from his God, who is his judge and party too. By that means, indeed, children of wrath may become children of the kingdom. The phrase in the text, however common it is in holy language, is very significant. And as it is evident, that the apostle calling natural men the children of disobedience, means more than that they were disobedient children; for such may the Lord's own children be: so to be children of wrath, is more than simply to be liable to, or under wrath. The phrase seems to intimate, that men are, whatsoever they are in their natural state, under the wrath of God, that they are wholly under wrath. Thus the natural man is a child of wrath: it "comes into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones." For though Judas was the only son of perdition amongst the apostles, yet all men, by nature, are of the same family.

2. There is the rise of this misery: men have it by nature. They owe it to their nature, not to their substance or essence; for that neither is, nor was sin, and therefore cannot make them children of wrath; though for sin it may be under wrath: not to their nature as qualified at man's creation by his Maker; but to their nature as vitiated and corrupted by the fall; to the vicious quality, or corruption of their nature, which is their principle of action, and, ceasing from action, the only principle in an unregenerate state.

3. The universality of this misery. All are by nature children of wrath: we, saith the apostle, even as others, Jews as well as Gentiles. Those that are now by grace the children of God, were by nature in no better case, than those that are still in their natural state.

Lastly, There is a glorious and happy change intimated here: we were children of wrath, but are not so now; grace has brought us out of that fearful state. This the apostle says of himself and other believers. And thus it well becomes the people of God to be often standing on the shore, and looking back to the red sea of the state of wrath they were some time weltering in, even as others.

Man's natural state is a state of wrath.

DOCTRINE, *The state of nature is a state of wrath.* Every one in a natural unregenerate state, is in a state of wrath. We are born children of wrath; and continue so until we be born again. Nay, as soon as we are children of Adam, we are children of wrath.

I shall usher in what I am to say on this point, with a few observations touching the universality of this state of wrath; which may serve to prepare the way for the word into your consciences.

Wrath has gone as wide as ever sin went. When angels sinned, the wrath of God brake in upon them as a flood: "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell." And thereby it was demonstrated, that no natural excellency in the creature will shield it from the wrath of God, if once it becomes a sinful creature. The finest and nicest

piece of the workmanship of heaven, if once the Creator's image upon it be defaced by sin, God can and will dash it in pieces in his wrath; unless satisfaction be made to justice, and that image be repaired; neither of which the sinner himself can do. Adam sinned; and the whole lump of mankind was leavened, and bound over to the fiery oven of God's wrath. And from the text ye may learn, (1.) The ignorance of that state cannot free men from it: the Gentiles that knew not God, "were by nature children of wrath, even as others." A man's house may be on fire, his wife and children perishing in the flames, while he knows nothing of it, and therefore is not concerned about it. Such is your case, O ye that are ignorant of these things! wrath is silently sinking into your souls, while ye are blessing yourselves, saying, 'We shall have peace.' Ye need not a more certain token that ye are children of wrath, than that you never yet saw yourselves such. Ye are grossly ignorant of your state by nature; and so ignorant of God, and of Christ, and your need of him: and though ye look on your ignorance as a covert from wrath; yet take it out of the mouth of God himself, that it will ruin you if it be not removed: "It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them." (2.) No outward privileges can exempt men from this state of wrath; for the Jews, the children of the kingdom, God's peculiar people, "were children of wrath, even as others." Though ye be church-members, partakers of all church privileges; though ye be descended of godly parents, of great and honourable families; be what ye will, ye are by nature heirs of

hell, children of wrath. (3.) No profession, nor attainments in a profession of religion, do or can exempt a man from this state of wrath. Paul was one of the strictest sect of the Jewish religion, yet a child of wrath, even as others, till he was converted. The close hypocrite, and the profane, are alike as to their state, however different their conversation be; and they will be alike in the fatal end: "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." (4.)

Young ones, that are yet but setting out into the world, have not that to do, to make themselves children of wrath, by following the graceless multitude. They are children of wrath by nature: so it is done already; they were born heirs of hell. They will indeed make themselves more so, if they do not, while they are young, flee from the wrath they were born to, by fleeing to Jesus Christ. Lastly, Whatever men are now by grace, they were even as others by nature. And this may be a sad meditation to them that have been at ease from their youth, and have had no changes.

Now, these things being premised, I shall, in the first place, show what this state of wrath is; next, confirm the doctrine; and then apply it.

I. I am to show what this state of wrath is. But who can fully describe the wrath of an angry God? None can do it. Yet so much of it may be discovered, as may serve to convince men of the absolute necessity of fleeing to Jesus Christ, out of that state of wrath. Anger in men is a passion and commotion of the spirit for an injury received, with a desire to resent the same. When it comes to a height,

and is fixed in one's spirit, it is called wrath. Now there are no passions in God, properly speaking: they are inconsistent with his absolute unchangeableness and independency: and therefore Paul and Barnabas, to remove the mistake of the Lycaonians, who thought they were gods, tell them, "they were men of like passions with themselves." Wrath, then, is attributed to God, not in respect of the affection of wrath, but the effects thereof. Wrath is a fire in the bowels of a man, tormenting the man himself: but there is no perturbation in God. His wrath does not in the least mar that infinite repose and happiness which he hath in himself: it is a most pure, undisturbed act of his will, producing dreadful effects against the sinner. It is little we know of an infinite God; but, condescending to our weakness, he is pleased to speak of himself to us after the manner of men. Let us therefore notice man's wrath, but remove every thing in our consideration of the wrath of God that argues imperfection; and so we may attain to some view of it however scanty. By this means we are led to take up the wrath of God against the natural man, in these three particulars:—

1. There is wrath in the heart of God against him. The Lord approves him not, but is displeased with him. Every natural man lies under the displeasure of God, and that is heavier than mountains of brass. Although he be pleased with himself, and others be pleased with him too; yet God looks down on him as displeased. (1.) His person is under God's displeasure: "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." A godly man's sin is displeasing to God, yet his person is still "accepted in the Beloved."

But “God is angry with the wicked every day.” There is a fire of wrath burns continually against him in the heart of God. Though their natural state be gilded over with a shining profession, yet they are abhorred of God: they are to him as “smoke in his nose,” and lukewarm water to be “spewed out of his mouth,—whited sepulchres,—a generation of vipers,” and a “people of his wrath.” (2.) He is displeased with all they do: it is impossible for them to please him, being *unbelievers*. He hates their persons; and so hath no pleasure in, but is displeased with their best works: “He that sacrificeth a lamb, is as if he cut off a dog’s neck,” &c. Their duty, as done by them, is “an abomination to the Lord.” And as men turn their back on those whom they are angry with; so the Lord’s refusing communion with the natural man in his duties, is a plain indication of this wrath.

2. There is wrath in the word of God against him. When wrath is in the heart, it seeks a vent by the lips: so God fights against the natural man with “the sword of his mouth.” The Lord’s word never speaks good of him, but always curseth and condemneth him. Hence it is, that when he is awakened, the word read or preached often increaseth his horror. (1.) It condemns all his actions, together with his corrupt nature. There is nothing he does but the law declares it to be sin. It is a rule of perfect obedience, from which he always, in all things, declines; and so it rejects every thing he doth as sin. (2.) It pronounceth his doom, and denounceth God’s curse against him: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written,

Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Be he ever so well in the world, it pronounceth a woe from heaven against him. The Bible is a quiver filled with arrows of wrath against him, ready to be poured in on his soul. God's threatenings in his word hang over his head as a black cloud, ready to shower down on him every moment. The word is indeed the saint's security against wrath; but it binds the natural man's sin and wrath together, as a certain pledge of his ruin, if he continues in that state: so the conscience being awakened, and perceiving this tie made by the law, the man is filled with terrors in his soul.

3. There is wrath in the hand of God against the natural man. He is under heavy strokes of wrath already, and is liable to more.

1st, There is wrath on his body: it is a piece of cursed clay, which wrath is sinking into by virtue of the threatening of the first covenant: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." There is never a disease, nor a pain that affects him, but it comes on him with the sting of God's indignation in it. They are all cords of death sent before to bind the prisoner.

2dly, There is wrath upon his soul. (1.) He can have no communion with God; he is foolish, and "shall not stand in God's sight." When Adam sinned, God turned him out of paradise: and natural men are, as Adam left them, banished from the gracious presence of the Lord; and can have no access to him in that state. There is war betwixt heaven and them, and so all commerce is cut off: "they are without God in the world." The sun is

gone down on them, and there is not the least glimpse of favour towards them from heaven. (2.) Hence the soul is left to pine away in its iniquity. The natural darkness of their minds, the averseness to good in their wills, the disorder of their affections, and distemper of their consciences, and all their natural plagues, are left upon them in a penal way; and being so left, increase daily. The Physician of souls comes by them, and goes by them, and cures others beside them; while they are consuming away in their iniquity, and ripening daily for utter destruction. (3.) They lie open to fearful additional plagues on their souls, even in this life. First, Sometimes they meet with deadening strokes; silent blows from the hand of an angry God; arrows of wrath that enter into their souls without noise: "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes," &c. God strives with them for a while, and convictions enter their consciences; but they rebel against the light. Their hearts are deadened; their affections withered; their consciences stupified; and their whole souls blasted: "cast forth as a branch and withered." They are plagued with judicial blindness. They shut their eyes against the light, and they are given over to the devil, the god of this world, to be blinded more. Yea, "God sends them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Even conscience, like a false light on the shore, leads them upon rocks, by which they are broken in pieces. They harden themselves against God; and he gives up with them, and leaves them to Satan and their own hearts, whereby they are hardened more

and more. They are often “given up unto vile affections.” The reins are laid on their necks; and they are left to run into all excess, as their furious lusts draw them. Secondly, Sometimes they meet with quickening strokes, whereby their souls become like mount Sinai; where nothing is seen but fire and smoke; nothing heard but the thunder of God’s wrath, and the voice of the trumpet of a broken law waxing louder and louder; which makes them, like Pashur, a terror to themselves.

3dly, There is wrath on the natural man’s enjoyments. Whatever be wanting in his house, there is one thing that is never wanting there: “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.” Wrath is on all that he has; on the bread that he eats, the liquor he drinks, the clothes which he wears. His basket and store are cursed. Some things fall wrong with him; and that comes to pass by virtue of this wrath: other things go according to his wish; and there is wrath in that too, for it is a snare to his soul: “The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.” This wrath turns his blessings into curses: “I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already.” The holy law is a killing letter to them; the ministry of the gospel, “a savour of death unto death.” In the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, “he eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.” Nay, more than all that, Christ himself is to him “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.” Thus wrath follows the natural man, as his shadow doth his body.

4thly, He is under the power of Satan. The devil has overcome him; so he is, by his conquest, his lawful captive. The natural man is condemned al-

ready, and therefore under the heavy hand of "him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil." And he keeps his prisoners in the prison of a natural state, bound hand and foot, Isa. lxi. 1. laden with divers lusts, as chains, wherewithal he holds them fast. Thou needest not, as many do, call on the devil to take thee; for he has a fast hold of thee already, as a child of wrath.

Lastly, The natural man hath no security for a moment's safety from the wrath of God coming on him to the uttermost. The curse of the law denounced against him has already tied him to the stake, so that the arrows of justice may pierce his soul, and in him may meet all the miseries and plagues that flow from the avenging wrath of God. See how he is set as a mark to the arrows of wrath: "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword: he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death." Doth he lie down to sleep? There is not a promise he knows of, or can know, to secure him that he shall not be in hell before he awake. Justice is pursuing, and cries for vengeance on the sinner; the law casts the fire-balls of its curses continually upon him; wasted and long tired patience is that which keeps in his life; he walks amidst enemies, armed against him: his name may be *Magor-missabib*, that is, terror round about.

Thus the natural man lives, but he must die too; and death is a dreadful messenger to him. It comes upon him armed with wrath, and puts three sad charges in his hand. (1.) Death chargeth him to bid an eternal farewell to all things in this world; to

leave it, and make away to another world. Ah! what a dreadful charge must this be to a child of wrath! He can have no comfort from heaven, for God is his enemy: and as for the things of the world, and the enjoyment of his lusts, which were the only springs of his comfort, these are in a moment dried up to him for ever. He is not ready for another world; he was not thinking of removing so soon; or if he was, yet he has no portion secured to him in the other world, but that which he was born to, and was increasing all his days, namely, a treasure of wrath. But go he must: his clay-god, the world, must be parted with; and what has he more? There was never a glimmering of light or favour from heaven to his soul; and now the wrath that did hang in the threatening, as a cloud like a man's hand, is darkening the face of the whole heaven above him; and if he look unto the earth, (from whence all his light was wont to come,) "behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and he shall be driven to darkness." (2.) Death chargeth soul and body to part till the great day. His soul is required of him. O what a miserable parting must this be to a child of wrath! Care was indeed taken to provide for the body things necessary for this life; but, alas! there is nothing laid up for another life to it; nothing to be a seed of a glorious resurrection: as it lived, so it must die, and rise again, sinful flesh; fuel for the fire of God's wrath. As for the soul, he was never solicitous to provide for it. It lay in the body dead to God, and all things truly good; and so must be carried out into the pit, in the grave-clothes of its natural state: for now that death comes, the com-

panions in sin must part. (3.) Death chargeth the soul to compear before the tribunal of God, while the body lies to be carried to the grave: “The spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” “It is appointed unto all men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Well were it for the sinful soul, if it might be buried together with the body. But that cannot be: it must go and receive its sentence; and shall be shut up in the prison of hell, while the cursed body lies imprisoned in the grave till the day of the general judgment.

When the end of the world, appointed of God, is come, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead arise. Then shall the weary earth, at the command of the Judge, cast forth the bodies, the cursed bodies of those that lived and died in their natural state: “The sea, death, and hell, shall deliver up their dead.” Their miserable bodies and souls shall be re-united, and they sisted before the tribunal of Christ. Then shall they receive that fearful sentence, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Whereupon “they shall go away into everlasting punishment.” They shall be eternally shut up in hell, never to get the least drop of comfort, nor the least ease of their torment. There they will be punished with the punishment of loss; being excommunicated for ever from the presence of God, his angels, and saints. All means of grace, all hopes of a delivery, shall be for ever cut off from their eyes. They shall not have “a drop of water to cool their tongues.” There the worm that shall gnaw them shall never die; the fire that shall scorch them shall never be quenched.

God shall, through all eternity, hold them up with the one hand, and pour the full vials of wrath into them with the other.

This is that state of wrath natural men live in; being under much of the wrath of God, and liable to more. But for a farther view of it, let us consider the qualities of that wrath. (1.) It is irresistible, there is no standing before it: "Who may stand in thy sight, when once thou art angry?" Can the worm, or the moth, defend itself against him that designs to crush it? As little can worm man stand before an angry God. Foolish man indeed practically bids a defiance to heaven: but the Lord often, even in this world, opens such sluices of wrath upon them, as all their might cannot stop. How much more will it be so in hell! (2.) It is insupportable. What one cannot resist, he will set himself to bear: but "Who shall dwell with devouring fire? who shall dwell with everlasting burning?" God's wrath is a weight that will sink men into the lowest hell! it is a burden no man is able to stand under: "A wounded spirit who can bear?" (3.) It is unavoidable to such as will go on impenitently in their sinful course: "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." We may now fly from it indeed, by flying to Jesus Christ; but such as fly from Christ, shall never be able to avoid it. Whither can men fly from an avenging God? where will they find a shelter? The hills will not hear them; the mountains will be deaf to their loudest cries, when they cry to them to "hide them from the wrath of the Lamb." (4.) It is powerful and

fierce wrath: "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." We are apt to fear the wrath of man more than we ought; but no man can apprehend the wrath of God to be more dreadful than it really is: the power of it can never be known to the utmost; seeing it is infinite, and, properly speaking, has no utmost: how fierce soever it be, either on earth or in hell, God can still carry it further. Every thing in God is most perfect in its kind; and therefore no wrath is so fierce as his. O sinner, how wilt thou be able to endure that wrath which will "tear thee in pieces." "Therefore I will be unto them as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe them. I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart," &c. (5.) It is penetrating and piercing wrath; it is burning wrath, and fiery indignation. There is no pain more exquisite than that which is caused by fire; and no fire so piercing as the fire of God's indignation, that "burns unto the lowest hell." The arrows of men's wrath can pierce flesh, blood, and bones, but cannot reach the soul: but the wrath of God will sink into the soul, and so pierce a man in the most tender part. Like as, when a person is thunderstruck, oft-times there is not a wound to be seen in the skin; yet life is gone, and the bones are, as it were, melted: so God's wrath can penetrate into, and melt one's soul within him, when his earthly comforts stand about him entire and untouched; as in Belshazzar's case. (6.) It is constant wrath, running parallel with the man's continuance in an unregenerate state; constantly attending him from the womb to the grave.

There are few days so dark, but the sun sometimes looketh out from under the cloud; but the wrath of God is an abiding cloud on the objects of it: "The wrath of God abideth on him" that believes not. (7.) It is eternal. O miserable soul! if thou fly not from this wrath unto Jesus Christ, though thy misery had a beginning, yet it shall never have an end. Should devouring death wholly swallow thee up, and for ever hold thee fast in a grave, it would be kind: but thou must live again, and never die, that thou mayest be ever dying in the hands of the living God. Cold death will quench the flame of man's wrath against us, if nothing else do it: but God's wrath, when it has come on the sinner millions of ages, will still be "the wrath to come." Lastly, However dreadful it is, and though it be eternal, yet it is most just wrath: it is a clear fire, without the least smoke of injustice. The judge of all the earth can do no wrong; he knows no transports of passion, for they are inconsistent with the perfection of his nature: "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man,) God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world?"

The Doctrine of the State of Wrath confirmed and vindicated.

II. I shall confirm the doctrine. Consider, (1.) How peremptory the threatening of the first covenant is: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Hereby sin and punishment being connected, the veracity of God ascertains the execution of the threatening. Now, all men being by nature under this covenant, the breach of it lays

them under the curse. (2.) The justice of God requires that a child of sin be a child of wrath; that the law being broken, the sanction thereof should take place. God, as man's ruler and judge, cannot but do right. Now it is "a righteous thing with God to recompense" sin with wrath: "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil," and "he hates all the workers of iniquity." (3.) The horrors of a natural conscience prove this. There is a conscience in the breasts of men, which can tell them they are sinners; and therefore liable to the wrath of God. Let men at any time soberly commune with themselves, and they will find they have the witness in themselves: "knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death." (4.) The pangs of the new birth, the work of the spirit of bondage on elect souls, in order to their conversion, demonstrate this: hereby their natural sinfulness and misery, as liable to the wrath of God, are plainly taught them; filling their hearts with fear of that wrath. Now, that this spirit of bondage is no other than the Spirit of God, whose work is to "convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment," this testimony must needs be true; for the Spirit of truth cannot witness an untruth. Meanwhile, true believers, being freed from the state of wrath, "receive not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but receive the spirit of adoption." And therefore, if fears of that nature do arise after the soul's union with Christ, they come from the saint's own spirit, or from a worse. Lastly, The sufferings of Christ plainly prove this doctrine. Wherefore was the Son of God a Son under wrath, but because the

children of men were children of wrath? He suffered the wrath of God, not for himself, but for those that were liable to it in their own persons. Nay, this not only shows us to have been liable to wrath; but that wrath also must have a vent in the punishing of sin. If this was done in the green tree, what will become of the dry? What a miserable case must a sinner be in that is out of Christ, that is not vitally united to Christ, and partakes not of his Spirit? God, who spared not his own Son, surely will not spare such a one.

But the unregenerate man, who has no great value for the honour of God, will be apt to rise up against the Judge, and in his own heart condemn his procedure. Nevertheless, the Judge being infinitely just, the sentence must be righteous. And therefore, to stop thy mouth, O proud sinner, and to still thy clamour against thy righteous Judge; consider, First, Thou art a sinner by nature; and it is highly reasonable that guilt and wrath be as old as sin. Why should not God begin to vindicate his honour, as soon as vile worms begin to impair it? Why should not the threatening take hold of the sinner, as soon as he casts away the command? Secondly, Thou hast not only an enmity against God in thy nature, but hast discovered it by actual sins, which are in his eye acts of hostility. Thou hast brought forth thy lusts into the field of battle against thy sovereign Lord. And now, that thou art such a criminal, thy condemnation is just: for besides the sin of thy nature, thou hast done that against heaven, which, if thou hadst done against men, thy life be-
hooved to have gone for it; and shall not wrath from

heaven overtake thee? (1.) Thou art guilty of high treason and rebellion against the King of heaven. The thought and wish of thy heart, which he knows as well as the language of thy mouth, has been "No God." Thou hast rejected his government, blown the trumpet, and set up the standard of rebellion against him; being one of those that say, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Thou hast striven against, and quenched his Spirit; practically disowned his laws proclaimed by his messengers; stopped thine ears at their voice, and sent them away mourning for thy pride. Thou hast conspired with his grand enemy the devil. Although thou art a sworn servant of the King of glory, daily receiving of his favours, and living on his bounty; thou art holding a correspondence, and hast contracted a friendship, with his greatest enemy, and art acting for him against thy Lord; for "the lusts of the devil ye will do." (2.) Thou art a murderer before the Lord. Thou hast laid the stumbling-block of thine iniquity before the blind world; and hast ruined the souls of others by thy sinful course. And, though thou dost not see now, the time may come when thou shalt see the blood of thy relations, neighbours, acquaintances and others, upon thy head: "Woe unto the world because of offences—Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." Yea, thou art a self-murderer before God: "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death." "Why will ye die?" Is it strange that they who will needs depart from God now, cost what it will, should be forced to depart from him at last into everlasting fire? But, what is yet

more criminal, thou art guilty of the murder of the Son of God, for the Lord will reckon thee amongst those that pierced him. Thou hast rejected him, as well as the Jews did; and by thy rejecting him, thou hast justified their deed. They indeed did not acknowledge him to be the Son of God, but thou dost. What they did against him, was in his state of humiliation; but thou hast acted against him in his state of exaltation. These things will aggravate thy condemnation. What wonder then, if the voice of the Lamb change to the roaring of the lion against the traitor and murderer!

Objection. But some will say, 'Is there not a vast disproportion betwixt our sin, and that wrath you talk of?' I answer, No: God punisheth no more than the sinner deserves. To rectify your mistake in this matter, consider, (1.) The vast rewards God has annexed to obedience. His word is no more full of fiery wrath against sin, than it is of gracious rewards to the obedience it requires. If heaven be in the promises, it is altogether equal that hell be in the threatenings. If death were not in the balance with life, eternal misery with eternal happiness, where were the proportion? What reason is there then to complain? (2.) How severe soever the threatenings be, yet all have enough to do to reach the end of the law. "Fear him," says our Lord, "which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." This bespeaks our dread of divine power and majesty; but yet how few fear him indeed! The Lord knows the hearts of sinners to be exceedingly intent upon fulfilling their lusts; they cleave so fondly to these

fulsome breasts, that a small force does not suffice to draw them away from them. But who are they that complain of that wrath as too great, but those to whom it is too little to draw them off from their sinful courses? It was the man who pretended to fear his lord, because he was an austere man, that kept his pound laid up in a napkin: and so he was condemned out of his own mouth. Thou art that man, even thou, whose objection I am answering. How can the wrath thou art under, and liable to, be too great, while yet it is not sufficient to awaken thee to flee from it? Is it time to relax the penalties of the law, when men are trampling the commands of it under foot? (3.) Consider how God dealt with his own Son, whom he spared not. The wrath of God seized on his soul and body both, and brought him into the dust of death. That his sufferings were not eternal, flowed from the quality of the sufferer, who was infinite; and therefore able to bear, at once, the whole load of wrath: and upon that account his sufferings were infinite in value. But now that the sufferings of a mere creature cannot be infinite in value, they must be protracted to an eternity. And what confidence can a rebel subject have to quarrel (for his part) a punishment executed on the King's Son? (4.) The sinner doth against God what he can: "Behold, thou hast done evil things as thou couldst." That thou hast not done more and worse, thanks to him who restrained thee, not to thyself. No wonder God shows his power on the sinner, who puts forth his power against God as far as it will reach. The unregenerate man puts no period to his sinful course; and would put

no bounds to it either, if he were not restrained by divine power for wise ends: and therefore it is just he be for ever under wrath. (5.) It is infinite majesty sin strikes against; and so it is, in some sort, an infinite evil. Sin riseth in its demerit, according to the quality of the party offended. The infinity of God makes infinite wrath the just demerit of sin. God is infinitely displeased with sin: and when he acts, he must act like himself, and show his displeasure by proportionable means. Lastly, Those that shall lie for ever under this wrath will be eternally sinning, and therefore must eternally suffer; not only in respect of divine judicial procedure, but because sin is its own punishment, in the same manner as holy obedience is its own reward.

The Doctrine of the misery of Man's natural state applied.

USE I.—Of information. Is our state by nature a state of wrath? Then,

1. Surely we are not born innocent. Those chains of wrath, which by nature are upon us, show us to be born criminals.

2. What desperate madness is it for sinners to go on in their sinful course? What is it but to heap coals of fire on thine own head, to lay more and more fuel to the fire of wrath, to “treasure up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath?” Thou mayest perish, “when his wrath is kindled but a little:” why wilt thou increase it yet more? Thou art already bound with such cords of death as will not easily be loosed: what need is there of more? Stand, careless sinner, and consider this.

3. Thou hast no reason to complain as long as thou art out of hell: "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" If one who has forfeited his life be banished his native country, and exposed to many hardships, he may well bear all patiently, seeing his life is spared. Do you murmur, for that you are under pain or sickness? Nay, bless God you are not there where the worm never dieth. Dost thou grudge that thou art not in so good a condition in the world as some of thy neighbours are? Be thankful rather that you are not in the case of the damned. Is thy substance gone from thee? Wonder that the fire of God's wrath hath not consumed thyself. Kiss the rod, O sinner, and acknowledge mercy; for God "punisheth us less than our iniquities deserve."

4. Here is a memorandum both for poor and rich. (1.) The poorest, that go from door to door, and had not one penny left them by their parents, were born to an inheritance. Their first father Adam left them children of wrath; and, continuing in their natural state, they cannot miss of it: for, "this is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed to him by God:" a heritage that will furnish them with a habitation who have not where to lay their head: they shall be "cast into utter darkness;" for to them "is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever;" and their drink shall be the red wine of God's wrath, "the dregs whereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring out and drink them." I know that those who are destitute of worldly goods, and wherewithal void of the knowledge and grace of God, who therefore may be called the devil's poor, will be apt to say here, we hope God will make us

suffer all our misery in this world, and we shall be happy in the next; as if their miserable outward condition in time would secure their happiness in eternity. A gross and fatal mistake! And this is another inheritance they have, namely, “lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.” But “the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.” Dost thou think, O sinner, that God, who commands judges on earth not to respect the persons of the poor in judgment, will pervert judgment for thee? Nay, know for certain, that however miserable thou art here, thou shalt be eternally miserable hereafter, if thou livest and diest in thy natural state. (2.) Many that have enough in the world, have far more than they know of. Thou hadst, (it may be,) O unregenerate man, an estate, a good portion, or large stock left thee by thy father; thou hast improved it, and the sun of prosperity shines upon thee; so that thou canst say with Esau, “I have enough.” But know, thou hast more than all that, an inheritance thou dost not consider of: thou art a child of wrath, an heir of hell. That is a heritage which will abide with thee amidst all the changes in the world, as long as thou continuest in an unregenerate state. When thou shalt leave thy substance to others, this shall go along with thyself into another world. Well, then, “rejoice, let thine heart cheer thee, walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes:” live above reproofs and warnings from the word of God; show thyself a man of a fine spirit, by casting off all fear of God: mock at seriousness; live like thyself, a child of wrath, an heir of hell; “but know thou, that for all these things God will

bring thee to judgment.” Assure thyself, “thy breaking shall come suddenly, at an instant.” “As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool.” And then that wrath that is now silently sinking into thy soul shall make a fearful hissing.

5. Woe to him that, like Moab, “hath been at ease from his youth,” and never saw the black cloud of wrath hanging over his head. There are many who “have no changes, therefore they fear not God.” They have lived in a good belief (as they call it) all their days; that is, they never had power to believe an ill report of their soul’s state. Many have come by their religion too easily; and as it came lightly to them, so it will go from them when the trial comes.

6. Think it not strange if you see one in great distress about his soul’s condition, who was wont to be as jovial, and as little concerned for his salvation, as any of his neighbours. Can one get a right view of himself, as in a state of wrath, and not be pierced with sorrows, terrors, and anxiety? Thunder-claps of wrath from the word of God, conveyed to the soul by the Spirit of the Lord, will surely keep a man awake.

Lastly, It is no wonder wrath come upon churches and nations, and upon us in this land; and that infants and children yet unborn smart under it. Most of the society are yet children of wrath; few are fleeing from it, or taking the way to prevent it; but people of all ranks are helping it on. The Jews rejected Christ; and their children have been smarting under wrath these sixteen hundred years. God grant that the bad entertainment given to Christ and his gospel by this generation, be not pursued with wrath on the succeeding one.

USE II.—Of exhortation. And here, 1. I shall drop a word to those who are yet in an unregenerate state. 2. To those that are brought out of it. 3. To all indifferently.

1. To you that are yet in an unregenerate state, I would sound the alarm, and warn you to see to yourselves while yet there is hope. O ye children of wrath, take no rest in this dismal state; but flee to Jesus Christ, the only refuge. Haste, and make your escape thither. O sinner, knowest thou where thou art? dost thou not see thy danger? The curse has entered into thy soul, wrath is thy covering, the heavens are growing blacker and blacker above thy head, the earth is weary of thee, the pit is opening her mouth for thee; and should the thread of thy life be cut this moment, thou art thenceforth past all hopes for ever. Sirs, if we saw you putting a cup of poison to your mouth, we would fly to you, and snatch it out of your hands. But, alas! you are in ten thousand times greater hazard; yet we can do no more but tell you your danger: invite, exhort, beseech, and obtest you to look to yourselves, and lament your stupidity and obstinacy, when we cannot prevail with you to take warning. If there were no hope of your recovery, we should be silent, and would not torment you before the time: but though you be lost and undone, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Wherefore I cry to you, in the name of the Lord, and in the words of the prophet, “Turn ye to the strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope.” Flee to Jesus Christ out of this your natural state.

Motive 1. While you are in this state, you must

stand or fall, according to the law or covenant of works. If you understood this aright, it would strike through your hearts as a thousand darts. All mankind were brought under it in Adam, as we heard before; and thou, in thy unregenerate state, art still where Adam left thee. It is true, there is another covenant brought in: but what is that to thee who art not brought into it? Thou must needs be under one of the two covenants; either under the law, or under grace. That thou art not under grace, the dominion of sin over thee manifestly evinceth; therefore, thou art under the law. Do not think God has laid aside the first covenant. No, he will “magnify the law, and make it honourable.” It is broken indeed on thy part; but it is absurd to think, that therefore your obligation is dissolved. Nay, thou must stand and fall by it, till thou canst produce thy discharge from God himself, who is the party in that covenant; and this thou canst not pretend to, seeing thou art not in Christ.

Now, to give you a view of your misery in this respect, consider these following things: (1.) Hereby you are bound over to death, in virtue of the threatening of death in that covenant, Gen. ii. 17. The condition being broken, you fall under the penalty: so it concludes you under wrath. (2.) There is no salvation for you under this covenant, but on a condition impossible to be performed by you. The justice of God must be satisfied for the wrong you have done already. God has written this truth in characters of the blood of his own Son. Yea, and you must perfectly obey the law for the time to come. So saith the law, “The man that doeth them shall

live in them." Come then, O sinner, see if thou canst make a ladder, whereby thou mayest reach the throne of God: stretch forth thine arms, and try if thou canst catch hold of the clouds, and pierce through these visible heavens; and then break through the jasper walls of the city above. These things shalt thou do, as soon as thou shalt reach heaven in thy natural state, or under this covenant.

(3.) There is no pardon under this covenant. Pardon is the benefit of another covenant, with which thou hast nothing to do: "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." As for thee, thou art in the hand of a merciless creditor, who will take thee by the throat, saying, "Pay what thou owest," and cast thee into prison, there to remain till thou hast paid the utmost farthing; unless thou be so wise as to get a cautioner in time, who is able to answer for all thy debt, and get up thy discharge. This Jesus Christ alone can do. Thou abidest under this covenant, and pleadest mercy: but what is thy plea founded on? There is not one promise of mercy or pardon in that covenant. Dost thou plead mercy for mercy's sake? justice will step in betwixt it and thee, and plead God's covenant-threatening, which he cannot deny. (4.) There is no place for repentance in this covenant, so as the sinner can be helped by it. For as soon as ever thou sinnest, the law lays its curse on thee, which is a dead weight thou canst by no means throw off; no, not though thine "head were waters, and thine eyes a fountain of tears, to weep day and night" for thy sin. That is "what the law cannot do, in

that it was weak through the flesh.” (5.) There is accepting of the will for the deed under this covenant, which was not made for good will, but good works. The mistake in this point ruins many. They are not in Christ, but stand under the first covenant; and yet they will plead this privilege. This is just as if one, having made a feast for those of his own family, and when they sit down at table, another man’s servant, that has run away from his master, should presumptuously come forward, and sit down among them; would not the master of the feast give such a stranger that check, “Friend, how camest thou in hither?” and since he is none of his family, command him to be gone quickly? Though a master accept the good will of his own child for the deed, can a hired servant expect that privilege? (6.) You have nothing to do with Christ while under that covenant. By the law of God a woman cannot be married to two husbands at once; either death or divorce must dissolve the first marriage, ere she can marry another. So we must first be dead to the law, ere we can be married to Christ. The law is the first husband; Jesus Christ, who raiseth the dead, marries the widow that was heart-broken and slain by the first husband. But while the soul is in the house with the first husband, it cannot plead a marriage-relation to Christ, nor the benefits of a marriage-covenant, which is not yet entered into: “Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” Peace, pardon, and such like benefits, are all benefits of the covenant of grace. And you must not think to stand off from Christ, and the marriage-covenant with him, and yet

plead these benefits, any more than one man's wife can plead the benefit of a contract of marriage passed betwixt another man and his own wife. Lastly, See the bill of exclusion passed in the court of heaven, against all under the covenant of works: "The son of the bond-woman shall not be heir." Heirs of wrath must not be heirs of glory. Whom the first covenant has power to exclude heaven, the second covenant cannot bring into it.

Objection. Then it is impossible for us to be saved?

Answer. It is so, while you are in that state. But if you would be out of that dreadful condition, hasten out of that state. If a murderer be under sentence of death, so long as he lives within the kingdom the laws will reach his life; but if he can make his escape, and get over the sea, into the dominions of another prince, our laws cannot reach him there. This is what we would have you to do: flee out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son; out of the dominion of the law, into the dominion of grace: then all the curses of the law, or covenant of works, shall never be able to reach you.

Motive 2. O ye children of wrath, your state is wretched, for you have lost God; and that is an unspeakable loss. You are "without God in the world." Whatever you may call yours, you cannot call God yours. If we look to the earth, perhaps you can tell us, that land, that house, or that herd of cattle is yours. But let us look upward to heaven; is that God, that grace, that glory yours? Truly, you have "neither part nor lot in that matter." When Nebuchadnezzar talks of cities and kingdoms, O how big does he speak! "Great Babylon that I have

built—my power—my majesty :” but he tells a poor tale when he comes to speak of God, saying, “Your God.” Alas ! sinner, whatever thou hast, God is gone from thee. O the misery of a godless soul ! Hast thou lost God ? Then, (1.) The substance of all thou hast in the world is gone. The godless man, have what he will, is one that hath not. I defy the unregenerate man to attain to soul-satisfaction, whatever he possesseth ; since God is not his God. All his days he eateth in darkness ; in every condition there is a secret dissatisfaction haunts his heart like a ghost ; the soul wants something, though perhaps it knoweth not what it is : and so it will be always, till the soul return to God, the fountain of satisfaction. (2.) Thou canst do nothing to purpose for thyself ; for God is gone, “his soul is departed from thee.” Losing God, thou hast lost the fountain of good ; and so, all grace, all goodness, all the saving influences of his Spirit. What canst thou do then ? what fruit canst thou bring forth more than a branch cut off from the stock ? Thou art become unprofitable. (3.) Death has come up into thy windows, yea, and is settled on thy face ; for God, “in whose favour is life,” is gone from thee, and so the life of thy soul is departed. What a loathsome lump is the body when the soul is gone ! Far more loathsome is thy soul in this case. Thou art dead while thou livest. Do not deny it ; seeing thy speech is laid, thine eyes closed, and all spiritual motion in thee ceased. (4.) Thou hast not a steady friend among all the creatures of God : for now that thou hast lost the master’s favour, all the family is set against thee. Conscience is thine enemy ; the

word never speaks good of thee : God's people loathe thee, so far as they see what thou art. The beasts and stones of the field are banded together against thee. The earth groaneth under thee : " the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together," because of thee, and such as thou art. Heaven will have nothing to do with thee : for " there shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth." Only " hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming." Lastly, Thy hell is begun already. What makes hell, but exclusion from the presence of God ? " Depart from me, ye cursed." Now you are gone from God already, with the curse upon thee. That shall be your punishment at length, (if you return not,) which is now your choice. As a gracious state is a state of glory in the bud, so a graceless state is hell in the bud ; which, if it continue, will come to perfection at length.

Motive 3. Consider the dreadful instances of the wrath of God ; and let them serve to awaken thee to flee out of this state. Consider, (1.) How it is fallen on men. Even in this world, many have been set up as monuments of divine vengeance, that others might fear. Wrath has swept away multitudes, who have fallen together by the hand of an angry God. Consider how the Lord " spared not the old world—bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly ; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample to those that after should live ungodly." But it is yet more dreadful to think of that weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, amongst those who in hell lift up their eyes,

but cannot get a drop of water to cool their tongues. Believe these things, and be warned by them, lest destruction come upon thee for a warning to others. (2.) Consider how wrath fell upon the fallen angels, whose case is absolutely hopeless. They were the first that ventured to break the divine law; and God set them up for monuments of his wrath against sin. They once left their own habitation, and were never allowed to look in again at the door; but they are “reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” Lastly, Behold how an angry God dealt with his own Son, standing in the room of elect sinners: “God spared not his own Son.” Sparing mercy might have been expected, if any at all. If any person could have obtained it, surely his own Son would have got it: but he spared him not. The Father’s delight is made a man of sorrows: he who is the wisdom of God becomes sore amazed, ready to faint away in a fit of horror. The weight of this wrath makes him sweat great drops of blood. Behold here how severe God is against sin! The sun was struck blind with this terrible sight; rocks were rent; graves opened; death, as it were, in the excess of astonishment, letting its prisoners slip away. What is a deluge, a shower of fire and brimstone on Sodomites, the terrible noise of a dissolving world, the whole fabric of heaven and earth falling down at once, and angels cast down from heaven into the bottomless pit? What are all these, I say, in comparison with this? God suffering, groaning, dying upon a cross! Infinite holiness did it, to make sin look like itself, namely, infinitely odious. And will men live at ease while exposed to this wrath?

Lastly, Consider what a God he is with whom thou hast to do, whose wrath thou art liable to. He is a God of infinite knowledge and wisdom; so that none of thy sins, however secret, can be hid from him. He infallibly finds out all means whereby wrath may be executed toward the satisfying of justice. He is of infinite power, and so can do what he will against the sinner. How heavy must the strokes of wrath be, which are laid on by an omnipotent hand! He is infinitely just, and therefore must punish: it were acting contrary to his nature, to suffer the sinner to escape wrath. Mark the reason: "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted." "I also will laugh at your calamity." Finally, He lives for ever to pursue the quarrel. Let us therefore conclude, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Be awakened then, O young sinner! Be awakened, O old sinner, who art yet in the state thou wast born in! Your security is none of God's allowance; it is the sleep of death: rise out of it ere the pit close its mouth on you. You may, if you will, labour to put these things out of your heads, that you may yet sleep, though in a state of wrath; but conviction so stifled will have a fearful resurrection: and the day is coming when the arrows of wrath shall so stick in thy soul, as thou shalt never be able to pluck them out through the ages of eternity, unless thou take warning in time.

But if any desire to flee from the wrath to come, and, for that end, to know what course to take; I offer them these few advices; and implore and be-

seech them, as they love their own souls, to fall in with them. (1.) Retire yourselves into some secret place, and there meditate on this your misery. Believe it, and fix your thoughts on it. Let each put the question to himself, ‘How can I live in this state? how can I die in it? how will I rise again, and stand before the tribunal of God in it?’ (2.) Consider seriously the sin of your nature, heart, and life. A kindly sight of wrath flows from a deep sense of sin. They who see themselves exceeding sinful, will find no great difficulty to perceive themselves to be heirs of wrath. (3.) Labour to justify God in this matter. To quarrel with God about it, and to rage like a wild bull in a net, will but fix you the more in it. Humiliation of soul, before the Lord, is necessary for an escape. God will not sell deliverance, but freely gives it to those who see themselves altogether unworthy of his favour. Lastly, Turn your eyes, O prisoners of hope, towards the Lord Jesus Christ; and embrace him as he offereth himself in the gospel: “There is no salvation in any other.” God is a consuming fire; ye are children of wrath: if the Mediator interpose not betwixt Him and you, ye are undone for ever. If ye would be safe, come under his shadow; for he “delivereth us from the wrath to come.” Accept of him in his covenant, wherein he offereth himself to thee: and so thou shalt, as the captive women, redeem thy life by marrying the conqueror. His blood will quench that fire of wrath which burns against thee: in the white raiment of his righteousness thou shalt be safe; for no storm of wrath can pierce it.

II. I shall drop a few words to the saints.

1. Remember, that at that time, (namely, when ye were in your natural state,) ye were without Christ—having no hope, and without God in the world. Call to mind the state ye were in formerly, and review the misery of it. There are five memorials I may thence give in to the whole assembly of the saints, who are no more children of wrath, but “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,” though as yet in their minority. (1.) Remember, that in the day our Lord took you by the hand, ye were in no better condition than others. O what moved him to take you, when he passed by your neighbours! He found you “children of wrath, even as others;” but he did not leave you so. He came into the common prison, where you lay in your fetters even as others, and, from amongst the multitude of condemned malefactors, he picked out you, commanded your fetters to be taken off, put a pardon in your hand, and brought you into the glorious liberty of the children of God, while he left others in the devil’s fetters. (2.) Remember, there was nothing in you to engage him to love you. In the day he first appeared for your deliverance, ye were children of wrath even as others, fit for hell, and altogether unfit for heaven; yet the King brought you into the palace, the King’s Son made love to you a condemned criminal, and espoused you to himself, on the day in which you might have been led forth to execution: “Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.” (3.) Remember, ye were fitter to be loathed than loved in that day. Wonder that, when he saw you in your blood, he looked not at you with abhorrence, and passed by you: wonder that ever such a

time could be “a time of love.” (4.) It was he that took off your prison-garments, and clothed you with robes of righteousness, garments of salvation. (5.) Remember your faults this day; as Pharaoh’s butler who had forgotten Joseph. Mind how you have forgotten, and how unkindly you have treated him who remembered you in your low estate. “Is this your kindness to your friend?” In the day of your deliverance, did ye think ye could have thus requited him, your Lord?

2. Pity the children of wrath, the world that lies in wickedness. Can ye be unconcerned for them, ye who were once in the same condition? Ye have got ashore indeed, but your fellows are yet in hazard of perishing; and will ye not make them all possible help for their deliverance? What they are, ye sometime were. This may draw pity from you, and engage you to use all means for their recovery.

3. Admire that matchless love which brought you out of the state of wrath. Christ’s love was active love: he loved thy soul from the pit of corruption. It was no easy work to purchase the life of a condemned sinner; but he gave his life for thy life. Men get the best view of the stars from the bottom of a deep pit: from this pit of misery into which thou wast cast by the first Adam, thou mayest get the best view of the Sun of Righteousness in all its dimensions. He is the second Adam, who took thee out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay.

4. Be humble, walk softly all your years. Be not proud of your gifts, graces, privileges, or attainments: but remember you “were children of wrath even as others.”

Lastly, Be wholly for your Lord. Every wife is obliged to be dutiful to her husband; but double ties lie upon her who was taken from a prison or a dunghill. If your Lord has delivered you from wrath, you ought, upon that very account, to be wholly his; to act for him, to suffer for him, and to do whatever he calls you to. The saints have no reason to complain of their lot in the world, whatever it be. Well may they bear the cross for him, by whom the curse was borne away from them: well may they bear the wrath of men in his cause, who has freed them from the wrath of God. Soul and body, and all thou hadst in the world, were sometime under wrath: he has removed that wrath, shall not all these be at his service? That thy soul is not overwhelmed with the wrath of God, is owing purely to Jesus Christ; and shall it not then be a temple for his Spirit? To him who believes that he was a child of wrath even as others, but is now delivered by the blessed Jesus, nothing will appear too much to do or suffer for his deliverer, when he has a fair call to it.

III. To conclude with a word to all: Let no man think lightly of sin, which lays the sinner open to the wrath of God. Fear the Lord, because of his dreadful wrath. Tremble at the thoughts of sin, against which God has such a fiery indignation. Do you think this is to press you to slavish fear? If it were so, one had better be a slave to God with a trembling heart, than a freeman to the devil with a seared conscience and a heart of adamant. But it is not so: you may love him and thus fear him too; yea, you ought to do it, though you were saints of the first magnitude.

HEAD III.

MAN'S UTTER INABILITY TO RECOVER HIMSELF.

ROMANS v. 6.

“ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

JOHN vi. 44.

“ No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.”

WE have now had a view of the total corruption of man's nature, and that load of wrath which lies on him, that gulf of misery he is plunged into in his natural state. But there is one part of his misery that deserves particular consideration; namely, his utter inability to recover himself: the knowledge of which is necessary for the due humiliation of a sinner. What I design here is, only to propose a few things, whereby to convince the unregenerate man of this his inability; that he may see an absolute need of Christ, and of the power of his grace.

As a man that is fallen into a pit cannot be supposed to help himself out of it, but by one of two ways; either by doing all himself alone, or taking hold of and improving the help offered him by others: so an unconverted man cannot be supposed to help himself out of that state, but either in the way of the law, or covenant of works, by doing all himself with-

out Christ; or else in the way of the gospel, or covenant of grace, by exerting his own strength to lay hold upon, and to make use of, the help offered him by a Saviour. But, alas! the unconverted man is dead in the pit, and cannot help himself either of these ways. Not the first way; for the first text tells us, that when our Lord came to help us, we were without strength, unable to recover ourselves. But when Christ comes and offereth help to sinners, cannot they take it? cannot they improve help when it comes to their hands? No; the second text tells us they cannot: "No man can come to me, (that is, believe in me, John vi. 35.) except the Father draw him." This is a drawing which enables them to come, who till then could not come, and therefore could not help themselves, by improving the help offered. It is a drawing which is always effectual; for it can be no less than hearing and learning of the Father, which whoso partakes of cometh to Christ, ver. 25. Therefore it is not drawing in the way of mere moral persuasion, which may be, yea, and always is, ineffectual; but it is drawing by mighty power, absolutely necessary for them that have no power in themselves, to come and take hold of the offered help.

Hearken then, O unregenerate man, and be convinced, that as thou art in a most miserable state by nature, so thou art utterly unable to recover thyself any manner of way. Thou art ruined: and what way wilt thou go to work to recover thyself? Which of the two ways wilt thou choose? Wilt thou try it alone? or wilt thou make use of help? Wilt thou fall on the way of works, or on the way of the gospel?

I know very well thou wilt not so much as try the way of the gospel, till once thou hast found the recovery impracticable in the way of the law. Therefore we shall begin where corrupt nature teaches men to begin, namely, at the way of the law of works.

I. Sinner, I would have thee believe that thy working will never effect it. Work, and do thy best, thou shalt never be able to work thyself out of this state of corruption and wrath. Thou must have Christ, else thou shalt perish eternally; it is only Christ in you can be the hope of glory. But if thou wilt needs try it, then I must lay before thee, from the unalterable word of the living God, two things which thou must do for thyself; and if thou canst do them, it must be yielded that thou art able to recover thyself; but if not, then thou canst do nothing this way for thy recovery.

1. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." That is, if thou wilt by doing enter into life, then perfectly keep the ten commands. For the scope of these words is to beat down the pride of the man's heart, and to let him see an absolute need of a Saviour, from the impossibility of keeping the law. The answer is given suitable to the address. Our Lord checks him for his compliment, "Good master," telling him, "There is none good but one, that is God." As if he had said, you think yourself a good man, and me another; but where goodness is spoken of, men and angels may veil their faces before the good God. And as to his question, wherein he discovereth his legal disposition, Christ does not answer him, saying, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved." That would not have been so

seasonable in the case of one who thought he could do well enough for himself, if he but knew what good thing he should do; but, suitable to the humour the man was in, he bids him keep the commandments. See then, O unregenerate man, what thou canst do in this matter: for, if thou wilt recover thyself in this way, thou must perfectly keep the commandments of God.

And, (1.) Thy obedience must be perfect, in respect of the principle of it: thy soul, the principle of action, must be perfectly pure, and altogether without sin; for the law requires all moral perfection, not only actual, but habitual; and so condemns original sin, impurity of nature, as well as of actions. Now, if thou canst bring this to pass, thou shalt be able to answer that question of Solomon's, so as never one of Adam's posterity could yet answer it: "Who can say I have made my heart clean?" But if thou canst not, the very want of this perfection is a sin and so lays thee open to the curse, and cuts thee off from life; yea, it makes all thine actions, even thy best actions, sinful: "for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" And dost thou think by sin, to help thyself out of sin and misery? (2.) Thy obedience must also be perfect in parts. It must be as broad as the whole law of God: if thou lackest one thing, thou art undone; for the law denounceth the curse on him that continueth not in every thing written therein. Thou must give internal and external obedience to the whole law; keep all the commands, in heart and life. If thou breakest any one of them, that will insure thy ruin. A vain thought or idle word will still shut thee up under the curse.

(3.) It must be perfect in respect of degrees, as was the obedience of Adam while he stood in his innocence. This the law requires, and will accept of no less: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." If one degree of that love, required by the law, be wanting; if each part of thy obedience be not screwed up to the greatest height commanded; that want is a breach of the law, and so leaves thee still under the curse. Although thou shouldst do what thou art able in keeping the commands, if thou fail in the least degree of obedience which the law enjoins, thou art certainly ruined for ever; unless thou take hold of Christ, renouncing all thy righteousness as filthy rags. Lastly, It must be perpetual, as the man Christ's obedience was, who always did the things that pleased the Father; for the tenor of the law is, "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them." Hence, though Adam's obedience was for a while absolutely perfect, yet, because at length he tripped in one point, namely, in eating the forbidden fruit, he fell under the curse of the law.

Now such is the obedience thou must perform, if thou wouldst recover thyself in the way of the law. But though thou shouldst thus obey, the law stakes thee down in the state of wrath, till another demand of it be satisfied, namely,

2. Thou must pay what thou owest. It is undeniable thou art a sinner: and whatever thou mayest be in time to come, justice must be satisfied for thy sins already committed. The honour of the law must be maintained, by thy suffering the denounced

wrath. It may be, thou hast changed thy course of life, or art now resolved to do it, and set about the keeping of the commands of God: but what hast thou done, or what wilt thou do with the old debt? Your obedience to God, though it were perfect, is a debt due to him for the time wherein it is performed; and can no more satisfy for former sins, than a tenant's paying the current year's rent, can satisfy the master for all by-gones. It remains then, that either thou must bear that wrath, to which for thy sin thou art liable according to the law; or else, thou must acknowledge thou canst not bear it, and thereupon have recourse to the surety, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me now ask thee, art thou able to satisfy the justice of God? Canst thou pay thy own debt? Surely not: for, seeing he is an infinite God whom thou hast offended, the punishment, being suited to the quality of the offence, must be infinite. But so it is, thy punishment or sufferings for sin cannot be infinite in value, seeing thou art a finite creature: therefore they must be infinite in duration or continuance; that is, they must be eternal. And so all thy sufferings in this world are but an earnest of what thou must suffer in the world to come.

Now, sinner, if thou canst answer these demands, thou mayest recover thyself in the way of the law. But art thou not conscious of thy inability to do any of these things, much more to do them all? Yet if thou do not all, thou dost nothing. Turn then to what course of life thou wilt, thou art still in a state of wrath. Alas! sinner, what art thou doing, while thou strivest to help thyself, but dost not receive and unite with Jesus Christ? Thou art labouring in the

fire, wearying thyself for very vanity; labouring to enter into heaven by the door, which Adam's sin so bolted, as neither he, nor any of his lost posterity, can ever enter by it. Dost thou not see the flaming sword of justice keeping thee off from the tree of life? Dost thou not hear the law denouncing a curse on thee for all thou art doing, even for thy obedience, thy prayers, thy tears, thy reformation of life, &c.; because, being under the law's dominion, thy best works are not so good as it requires them to be, under the pain of the curse? Believe it, Sirs, if you live and die out of Christ, without being actually united to him, as a second Adam, a life-giving Spirit, and without coming under the covert of his atoning blood: though ye should do the utmost that any man on earth can do in keeping the commands of God, ye shall never see the face of God in peace. The word is gone out of the Lord's mouth in righteousness, and cannot return; you should perish for ever, notwithstanding of all this, as not being in Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "Neither is there salvation in any other." "He that believeth not shall be damned."

Object. But God is a merciful God, and he knows we are not able to answer these demands; we hope therefore to be saved if we do as well as we can, and keep the commands as well as we are able. *Ans.* (1.) Though thou art able to do many things, thou art not able to do one thing aright: thou canst do nothing acceptable to God, being out of Christ: "Without me ye can do nothing." An unrenewed man as thou art, can do nothing but sin, as we have already evinced. Thy best actions are sin, and so

they increase thy debt to justice : how then can it be expected they should lessen it? (2.) If God should offer to save men upon condition that they did all they could do in obedience to his commands, we have ground to think that those who would be-take themselves to that way should never be saved : for where is the man that does as well as he can? who sees not many false steps he has made, which he might have avoided? There are so many things to be done, so many temptations to carry us out of the road of duty, and our nature is so very apt to be set on fire of hell; that we would surely fail, even in some point that is within the compass of our natural abilities. But, (3.) Though thou shouldst do all thou art able to do, in vain dost thou hope to be saved in that way. What word of God is this hope of thine founded on? It is neither founded on law nor gospel, and therefore it is but a delusion. It is not founded on the gospel; for the gospel leads the soul off itself to Jesus Christ for all; and it “establisheth the law :” whereas this hope of yours cannot be established but on the ruins of the law, which God will magnify and make honourable. And hence it appears, that it is not founded on the law neither. When God set Adam a working for happiness to himself and his posterity, perfect obedience was the condition required of him: and a curse was denounced in case of disobedience. The law being broken by him, he and his posterity were subjected to the penalty for sin committed, and withal still bound to perfect obedience : for it is absurd to think that man’s sinning, and suffering for his sin, should free him from his duty of obedience to his Creator. When

Christ came in the room of the elect, to purchase their salvation, the same were the terms. Justice had the elect under arrest; if he minds to deliver them, the terms are known: He must satisfy for their sin, by suffering the punishment due to it; he must do what they cannot do, to wit, obey the law perfectly, and so fulfil all righteousness. Accordingly, all this he did, and so became “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” And now, dost thou think God will abate of these terms to thee, when his own Son got no abatement of them? Expect it not, though thou shouldst beg it with tears of blood; for if they prevailed, they be-hooved to prevail against the truth, justice, and honour of God: “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.—And the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them.” It is true, that God is merciful: but cannot he be merciful, unless he save you in a way that is neither consistent with his law nor gospel? Hath not his goodness and mercy sufficiently appeared in sending the Son of his love, to do “what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh?” He has provided help for them that cannot help themselves: but thou, insensible of thine own weakness, wilt needs think to recover thyself by thine own works; while thou art no more able to do it, than to remove mountains out of their place.

Wherefore I conclude, thou art utterly unable to recover thyself, by the way of works or of the law. O that thou wouldst conclude the same concerning thyself!

II. Let us try next what the sinner can do to recover himself in the way of the gospel. It is likely, thou thinkest, that howbeit thou canst not do all by thyself alone, yet, Jesus Christ offering thee help, thou canst of thyself embrace it, and use it to thy recovery. But, O sinner, be convinced of thine absolute need of the grace of Christ: for truly there is help offered, but thou canst not accept of it; there is a rope cast out to hale shipwrecked sinners to land, but, alas! they have no hands to catch hold of it. They are like infants exposed in the open field, that must starve though their food be lying by them, unless one put it into their mouths. To convince natural men of this, let it be considered,

1. That although Christ is offered in the gospel, yet they cannot believe in him. Saving faith is the faith of God's elect, the special gift of God to them, wrought in them by his Spirit. Salvation is offered to them that will believe in Christ; but "how can ye believe?" It is offered to those that will come to Christ; but "no man can come to him, except the Father draw him." It is offered to them that will look to him as lifted up on the pole of the gospel; but the natural man is spiritually *blind*; and as to the things of the Spirit of God, he cannot know them, for they are *spiritually discerned*. Nay, whosoever will, he is welcome; "let him come." But there must be a day of power on the sinner, before he will be *willing*.

2. Man naturally has nothing wherewithal to improve for his recovery the help brought in by the gospel. He is cast away in a state of wrath; but is bound hand and foot, so that he cannot lay hold

of the cords of love thrown out to him in the gospel. How can one believe, how can he repent, whose understanding is *darkness*; whose heart is a stony heart, inflexible, insensible; whose affections are wholly disordered and distempered; who is averse to good, and bent to evil? The arms of natural abilities are too short to reach supernatural help: hence those who most excel in them, are often most estranged from spiritual things: “Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.”

3. Man cannot work a saving change on himself: but so changed he must be, else he can neither believe nor repent, nor ever see heaven. No action can be without a suitable principle. Believing, repenting, and the like, are the product of the new nature, and can never be produced by the old corrupt nature. Now, what can the natural man do in this matter? He must be regenerate, begotten again unto a lively hope: but as the child cannot be active in his own generation, so a man cannot be active but passive only in his own regeneration. The heart is shut against Christ: man cannot open it, only God can do it by his grace. He is dead in sin: he must be quickened, raised out of his grave. Who can do this but God himself? Nay, “he must be created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” These are works of omnipotency, and can be done by no less a power.

4. Man, in his depraved state, is under an utter inability to do any thing truly good, as was showed before at large; how then can he obey the gospel? His nature is the very reverse of the gospel: how can he of himself fall in with that plan of salvation,

and accept the offered remedy? The corruption of man's nature infallibly includes his utter inability to recover himself any manner of way: and whoso is convinced of the one, must needs admit the other; for they stand and fall together. Were all the purchase of Christ offered to the unregenerate man for one good thought, he cannot command it: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." Were it offered on condition of a good word, yet "how can ye, being evil, speak good things?" Nay, were it left to yourselves to choose what is easiest, Christ himself tells you, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Lastly, The natural man cannot but resist the Lord's offering to help him; howbeit that resistance is infallibly overcome in the elect by converting grace. Can the stony heart choose but resist the stroke? There is not only an inability, but an enmity and obstinacy in man's will by nature. God knows, O natural man! (whether thou knowest it or not,) that "thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass," and cannot be overcome but by him who hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. Hence is there such hard work in converting of a sinner. Sometimes he seems to be caught in the net of the gospel; yet quickly he slips away again. When good hopes are conceived of him by those that travail in birth for the forming of Christ in him, there is oft-times nothing brought forth but wind. The deceitful heart makes many a shift to avoid a Saviour, and to cheat the man of his eternal happiness. Thus the natural man lies sunk in a state of sin and wrath, utterly unable to recover himself.

Object. (1.) If we be under an utter inability to do any good, how can God require us to do it? *Ans.* God making man upright, gave him a power to do every thing he should require of him; this power man lost by his own fault. We were bound to serve God, and to do whatsoever he commanded us, as being his creatures; and also, we were under the superadded tie of a covenant for that effect. Now, we having by our own fault disabled ourselves, shall God lose his right of requiring our task, because we have thrown away the strength he gave us wherewithal to perform it? Has the creditor no right to require payment of his money, because the debtor has squandered it away, and is not able to pay him? Truly, if God can require no more of us than we are able to do, we need no more to save us from wrath, but to make ourselves unable for every duty, and to incapacitate ourselves for serving God any manner of way, as profane men frequently do: and so the deeper one is immersed in sin, he will be the more secure from wrath; for where God can require no duty of us, we do not sin in omitting it; and where there is no sin, there can be no wrath. (As to what may be urged by the unhumiliated soul, against the putting of our stock in Adam's hand, the righteousness of that dispensation was cleared before.) But moreover, the unrenewed man is daily throwing away the very remains of natural abilities, that light and strength which are to be found amongst the ruins of mankind. Nay, farther, he will not believe his own utter inability to help himself: so that out of his own mouth he will be condemned. Even those who make their natural impotency to good a

cover to their sloth, do, with others, delay the work of turning to God from time to time: under convictions, make large promises of reformation, which afterwards they never regard; and delay their repentance to a death-bed, as if they could help themselves in a moment; which speaks them to be far from a due sense of their natural inability, whatever they pretend.

Now, if God can require of men the duty they are not able to do, he can in justice punish them for their not doing it, notwithstanding of their inability. If he have power to exact the debt of obedience, he has also power to cast the insolvent debtor into prison for his not paying it. Further, though unregenerate men have no gracious abilities, yet they want not natural abilities, which, nevertheless, they will not improve. There are many things they can do which they do not, they will not do them; and therefore their damnation will be just. Nay, all their inability to good is voluntary: they will *not come* to Christ; they will not repent, they *will die*. So they will be justly condemned; because they will not turn to God, nor come to Christ, but love their chains better than their liberty, and “darkness rather than light.”

Object. (2.) Why do you then preach Christ to us, call us to come to him, to believe, repent, and use the means of salvation? *Ans.* Because it is your duty so to do. It is your duty to accept of Christ as he is offered in the gospel, to repent of your sins, and to be holy in all manner of conversation: these things are commanded you of God; and his command, not your ability, is the measure of your duty. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are the means

that God is pleased to make use of for converting his elect, and working grace in their hearts: to them “faith cometh by hearing,” while they are as unable to help themselves as the rest of mankind are. Upon very good grounds we may, at the command of God, who raised the dead, go to their graves, and cry in his name, “Awake thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” And, seeing the elect are not to be known and distinguished from others before conversion, so we preach Christ to all, and shoot the arrow at a venture, which God himself directs as he sees meet. Moreover, these calls and exhortations are not altogether in vain, even to those that are not converted by them. Such persons may be convinced, though they be not converted; although they be not sanctified by these means, yet they may be restrained by them from running into that excess of wickedness which otherwise they would arrive at. Finally, Though ye cannot recover yourselves, nor take hold of the saving help offered to you in the gospel, yet, even by the power of nature, ye may use the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates the benefits of redemption to ruined sinners, who are utterly unable to recover themselves out of the state of sin and wrath. Ye may, and can, if ye please, do many things that would set you on a fair way for help from the Lord Jesus Christ. Ye may go so far on as to be not far from the kingdom of God, as the discreet scribe had done; though (it would seem) he was destitute of supernatural abilities. Though ye cannot cure yourselves, yet ye may come to the pool, where many such diseased persons as ye are

have been cured; though ye have none to put you into it, yet ye may lie at the side of it: and “who knows but the Lord may return, and leave a blessing behind him,” as in the case of the impotent man. I hope Satan does not chain you to your houses, nor stake you down in your fields on the Lord’s day; but ye are at liberty, and can wait at the posts of wisdom’s doors, if ye will: and when ye come thither, there is no force upon you, obliging you to apply all you hear to others; ye may apply to yourselves what belongs to your state and condition: and, when ye go home, ye are not fettered in your houses, where, perhaps, no religious discourse is to be heard; but ye may retire to some separate place, where ye can meditate and exercise your conscience with pertinent questions upon what ye have heard. Ye are not possessed with a dumb devil, that ye cannot get your mouths opened in prayer to God. Ye are not so driven out of your beds to your worldly business, and from your worldly business to your beds again, but ye might, if ye would, offer some prayers to God upon the case of your perishing souls. Ye may examine yourselves as to the state of your souls, in a solemn manner, as in the presence of God; ye may discern that ye have no grace, and that ye are lost and undone without it, and ye may cry unto God for it. These things are within the compass of natural abilities, and may be practised where there is no grace. It must aggravate your guilt, that you will not be at so much pains about the state and case of your precious souls. And if ye do not what ye can do, ye will be condemned, not only for your want of grace, but for your despising it.

Object. (3.) But all this is needless, seeing we are utterly unable to help ourselves out of the state of sin and wrath. *Ans.* Give no place to that delusion which puts asunder what God hath joined; namely, the use of means, and a sense of our own impotency. If ever the Spirit of God graciously influence your souls, ye will become thoroughly sensible of your absolute inability, and yet enter upon a rigorous use of means. Ye will do for yourselves as if ye were to do all, and yet overlook all ye do as if ye had done nothing. Will ye do nothing for yourselves, because ye cannot do all? Lay down no such impious conclusion against your own souls. Do what you can; and it may be, while ye are doing what you can for yourselves, God will do for you what ye cannot. “Understandest thou what thou readest?” said Philip to the eunuch: “How can I,” saith he, “except some man should guide me?” He could not understand the Scripture he read; yet he could read it: he did what he could—he read; and, while he was reading, God sent him an interpreter. The Israelites were in a great strait at the Red Sea; and how could they help themselves, when upon the one hand were mountains, and on the other the enemy’s garri-son; when Pharaoh and his host were behind them, and the Red Sea before them? What could they do? “Speak unto the children of Israel,” saith the Lord to Moses, “that they go forward.” For what end should they go forward? can they make a passage to themselves through the sea? No; ‘but let them go forward,’ saith the Lord: ‘though they cannot turn sea to dry land, yet they can go forward to the shore.’ And so they did; and when they did

what they could, God did for them what they could not do.

Quest. Has God promised to convert and save them, who, in the use of means, do what they can towards their own relief? *Ans.* We may not speak wickedly for God: natural men, being “strangers to the covenants of promise,” have no such promise made to them. Nevertheless, they do not act rationally unless they exert the powers they have, and do what they can. For, (1.) It is possible this course may succeed with them. If ye do what ye can, it may be God will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves. This is sufficient to determine a man in a matter of the utmost importance, such as this is, “Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.” “Who knoweth if he will return?” If success may be, the trial should be. Why then do not ye reason with yourselves, as the four lepers did who sat at the gate of Samaria? Why do ye not say, ‘If we sit still, not doing what we can, we die: let us put it to a trial; if we be saved, we shall live—if not, we shall but die.’ (2.) It is probable this course may succeed. God is good and merciful: he loves to surprise men with his grace, and is often “found of them that sought him not.” If ye do thus, ye are so far in the road of your duty, and ye are using the means which the Lord is wont to bless for men’s spiritual recovery; ye lay yourselves in the way of the great Physician, and so it is probable ye may be healed. Lydia went, with others, to the place “where prayer was wont to be made, and the Lord opened her heart.” Ye plough and sow, though nobody can tell you for certain that ye will

get so much as your seed again ; ye use means for the recovery of your health, though ye are not sure they will succeed. In these cases probability determines you ; and why not in this also ? Importunity, we see, does very much with men : therefore pray, meditate, desire help of God ; be much at the throne of grace, supplicating for grace ; and do not faint. Though God regard not you, who, in your present state, are universally depraved, and vitiated in all the powers of your soul, yet he may regard his own ordinance. Though he regards not your prayers, your meditations, &c. yet he may regard prayer, meditation, and the like means of his own appointment, and so bless them to you. Wherefore, if ye will not do what ye can, ye are not only dead, but you declare yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

To conclude : Let the saints admire the freedom and power of grace, which came to them in their helpless condition, made their chains fall off, raised the fallen creatures, and brought them out of the state of sin and wrath, wherein they would have lain and perished had they not been mercifully visited. Let the natural man be sensible of his utter inability to recover himself. Know thou art without strength, and canst not come to Christ till thou be drawn ; thou art lost, and canst not help thyself. This may shake the foundation of thy hopes, who never sawest thy absolute need of Christ and his grace ; but thinkest to shift for thyself by thy civility, morality, drowsy wishes and duties ; and by thy faith and repentance, which have sprung out of thy natural powers, without the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ. O be convinced of thy absolute need of Christ and

his overcoming grace : believe thy utter inability to recover thyself; that so thou mayest be humbled, shaken out of thy self-confidence, and lie down in dust and ashes, groaning out thy miserable case before the Lord. A kindly sense of thy natural impotency, the impotency of depraved human nature, would be a step towards a delivery.

STATE III.

THE STATE OF GRACE, OR BEGUN RECOVERY.

HEAD I.

REGENERATION.

1 PETER i. 23.

“ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”

WE proceed now to the state of grace, the state of begun recovery of human nature; into which all that shall partake of eternal happiness are translated, while in this world. It is the result of a gracious change, made upon those who shall inherit eternal life, which change may be taken up in these two: (1.) In opposition to their real natural state, the state of corruption, there is a change made upon them in regeneration, whereby their nature is changed. (2.) In opposition to their natural relative state, the state of wrath, there is a change made upon them in their union with the Lord Jesus Christ; by which they are set beyond the reach of condemnation. These therefore, namely, regeneration and union with Christ, I design to handle, as the great and comprehensive changes on a sinner, constituting him in the state of grace.

The first of these we have in the text, together with the outward and ordinary means by which it is

brought about. The apostle here, to excite the saints to the study of holiness, and particularly of brotherly love, puts them in mind of their spiritual original. He tells them they were born again, and that of an incorruptible seed, the word of God. This speaks them to be brethren, partakers of the same new nature; which is the root from which holiness, and particularly brotherly love doth spring. We are once born sinners; we must be born again, that we may be saints. The simple word signifies “to be begotten,” and so it may be read, Matt. xi. 11.—“to be conceived,” Matt. i. 20.—and “to be born,” Matt. ii. 1. Accordingly, the compound word used in the text may be taken in its full latitude, the last notion presupposing the two former: and so regeneration is a supernatural real change on the whole man, fitly compared to natural generation. The ordinary means of regeneration, called the seed, whereof the new creature is formed, is not corruptible seed. Of such, indeed, our bodies are generated: but the spiritual seed, of which the new creature is generated, is incorruptible; namely, “the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” The sound of the word of God passeth even as other sounds do; but the word lasteth, liveth, and abideth, in respect of its everlasting effects, on all upon whom it operates. This word, which by the gospel is preached unto you, (ver. 25.) impregnated by the Spirit of God, is the means of regeneration; and by it are dead sinners raised to life.

DOCTRINE, *All men in the state of grace are born again.* All gracious persons, namely, such as

are in a state of favour with God, and endowed with gracious qualities and dispositions, are regenerate persons. In discoursing this subject, I shall show what regeneration is—next, why it is so called—and then apply the doctrine.

Of the Nature of Regeneration.

I. For the better understanding of the nature of regeneration, take this along with you in the first place, That as there are false conceptions in nature, so there are also in grace; and by these many are deluded, mistaking some partial changes made upon them for this great and thorough change. To remove such mistakes, let these few things be considered: (1.) Many call the church their mother, whom God will not own to be his children: “My mother’s children (that is, false brethren) were angry with me.” All that are baptized are not born again. Simon was baptized, yet still “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” Where Christianity is the religion of the country, many will be called by the name of Christ who have no more of him but the name: and no wonder, seeing the devil had his goats among Christ’s sheep in those places where but few professed the Christian religion: “They went out from us, but they were not of us.” (2.) Good education is not regeneration. Education may chain up men’s lusts, but cannot change their hearts. A wolf is still a ravenous beast though it be in chains. Joash was very devout during the life of his good tutor Jehoiada; but afterwards he quickly showed what spirit he was of, by his sudden apostacy. Good example is of mighty influence to change the

outward man; but that change often goes off when one changes his company; of which the world affords many sad instances. (3.) A turning from open profanity to civility and sobriety, falls short of this saving change. Some are for a while very loose, especially in their younger years; but at length they reform, and leave their profane courses. Here is a change, yet but such a one as may be found in men utterly void of the grace of God, and whose righteousness is so far from exceeding, that it doth not come up to the righteousness of the scribes or Pharisees. (4.) One may engage in all the outward duties of religion, and yet not be born again. All the external acts of religion are within the compass of natural abilities. Yea, hypocrites may have the counterfeit of all the graces of the Spirit; for we read of “true holiness,” and “faith unfeigned;” which shows us, that there is a counterfeit holiness, and a feigned faith. (5.) Men may advance to a great deal of strictness in their own way of religion, and yet be strangers to the new birth: “After the most strictest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.” Nature has its own unsanctified strictness in religion. The Pharisees had so much of it, that they looked on Christ as little better than a mere libertine. A man whose conscience hath been awakened, and who lives under the felt influence of the covenant of works, what will he not do that is within the compass of natural abilities? It was a truth, though it came out of a hellish mouth, that “skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life.” (6.) One may have sharp soul-exercises and pangs, and yet die in the birth. There may be sore pangs and throes of

conscience, which turn to nothing at last. Pharaoh and Simon Magus had such convictions as made them desire the prayers of others for them. Judas repented himself; and, under terrors of conscience, gave back his ill-gotten pieces of silver. Trees may blossom fairly in the spring, on which no fruit is to be found in the harvest; and some have sharp soul-exercises, which are nothing but foretastes of hell.

The new birth, however in appearance hopefully begun, may be marred two ways: First, Some, like Zarah, are brought to the birth, but go back again. They have sharp convictions for a while; but these go off, and they turn as careless about their salvation, as profane as ever; and usually worse than ever, "their last state is worse than their first." They get awakening grace, but not converting grace; and that goes off by degrees, as the light of the declining day, till it issue in midnight darkness. Secondly, Some, like Ishmael, come forth too soon; they are born before the time of the promise, Gen. xvi. 2. compare Gal. iv. 22. and downward. They take up with a mere law-work, and stay not till the time of the promise of the gospel. They snatch at consolation, not waiting till it be given them; and foolishly draw their comfort from the law that wounded them. The law, that rigorous husband, throws in curses and vengeance upon their souls; then they fall a reforming, praying, mourning, promising, and vowing, till this ghost be laid; which done, they fall asleep again in the arms of the law: but they are never shaken out of themselves and their own righteousness, nor brought forward to Jesus Christ. Lastly, There may be a wonderful moving of the affections in souls

that are not at all touched with regenerating grace. Where there is no grace, there may, notwithstanding, be a flood of tears, as in Esau, who “found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” There may be great flashes of joy, as in the hearers of the word, represented in the parable of the stony ground, who “anon with joy receive it.” There may also be great desires after good things, and great delight in them too; as in those hypocrites, described Isa. lviii. 2. “Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways.—They take delight in approaching to God.” See how high they may sometimes stand, who yet fall away, Heb. vi. 4—6. They may be enlightened, taste of the heavenly gift, be partakers of the Holy Ghost, taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. Common operations of the divine Spirit, like a land-flood, make a strange turning of things upside down: but when they are over, all runs again in the ordinary channel. All these things may be, where the sanctifying Spirit of Christ never rests upon the soul, but the stony heart still remains; and in that case, these affections cannot but wither, because they have no root.

But regeneration is a real thorough change, whereby the man is made a “new creature.” The Lord God makes the creature a new creature, as the goldsmith melts down the vessel of dishonour, and makes it a vessel of honour. Now this change made in regeneration is,

1. A change of qualities or dispositions: it is not a change of the substance, but of the qualities of the soul. Vicious qualities are removed, and the contrary dispositions are brought in in their room: “The

old man is put off,—the new man put on.” Man lost none of the rational faculties of his soul by sin: he had an understanding still, but it was darkened; he had still a will, but it was contrary to the will of God. So in regeneration there is not a new substance created, but new qualities are infused: light instead of darkness, righteousness instead of unrighteousness.

2. It is a supernatural change: he that is born again is “born of the Spirit.” Great changes may be made by the power of nature, especially when assisted by external revelation; and nature may be so elevated by the common influences of the Spirit, that one may thereby be turned into another man, (as Saul was, 1 Sam. x. 6.) who yet never becomes a new man. But in regeneration, nature itself is changed, and we become partakers of the divine nature: and this must needs be a supernatural change. How can we, that are dead in trespasses and sins, renew ourselves, more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave? Who, but the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, can form Christ in a soul, changing it into the same image? Who, but the Spirit of sanctification, can give the new heart? Well may we say, when we see a man thus changed, “This is the finger of God.”

3. It is a change into the likeness of God: “We, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.” Every thing that generates, generates its like: the child bears the image of the parent; and they that are born of God bear God’s image. Man, aspiring to be as God, made himself like the devil; in his natural state he resembles the devil, as a child doth his father: “Ye

are of your father the devil." But when this happy change comes, that image of Satan is defaced, and the image of God restored. Christ himself, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, is the pattern after which the new creature is made: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Hence he is said to be formed in the regenerate, Gal. iv. 19.

4. It is a universal change: all things become new. It is a blessed leaven that leavens the whole lump, the whole spirit, and soul, and body. Original sin infects the whole man; and regenerating grace, which is the salve, goes as far as the sore. This fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness: goodness of the mind, goodness of the will, goodness of the affections, goodness of the whole man. He gets not only a new head to know religion, or a new tongue to talk of it, but a new heart to love and embrace it in the whole of his conversation. In those natural changes spoken of before, there are, as it were, pieces of new cloth put into an old garment; but the gracious change is a thorough change, a change both of heart and life.

5. Yet it is but an imperfect change. Though every part of the man is renewed, there is no part of him perfectly renewed. As an infant has all the parts of a man, but none of them are come to their perfect growth, so regeneration brings a perfection of parts, to be brought forward in the gradual advances of sanctification: "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Although in regeneration there is a heavenly light let into the mind, yet there is still some darkness there; though the will is renewed, it is not perfectly

renewed, there is still some of the old inclination to sin remaining: and thus it will be till that which is in part be done away, and the light of glory come. Adam was created at his full stature; but they that are born must have their time to grow up: so those that are born again, do come forth into the new world of grace but imperfectly holy.

Lastly, Nevertheless it is a lasting change, which never goes off. The seed is incorruptible, saith the text; and so is the creature that is formed of it. The life given in regeneration, whatever decays it may fall under, can never be utterly lost: "His seed remaineth in him who is born of God." Though the branches should be cut down, the root shall abide in the earth; and, being watered with the dew of heaven, shall sprout again: for "the root of the righteous shall not be moved."

But to come to particulars,

First, In regeneration the mind is savingly enlightened. There is a new light let into the understanding, so that they who were "sometimes darkness, are now light in the Lord." The beams of the light of life make their way into the dark dungeon of the heart: then the night is over, and the morning light is come, which will shine more and more unto the perfect day. Now the man is illuminated,

1. In the knowledge of God. He has far other thoughts of God than ever he had before: "I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." The Spirit of the Lord brings him back to that question, What is God? and catechiseth him anew upon that grand point, so as he is made to say, "I have heard of thee by the

hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee." The spotless purity of God, his exact justice, his all-sufficiency, and other glorious perfections revealed in his word, are, by this new light, discovered to the soul with a plainness and certainty that doth as far exceed the knowledge it had of these things before, as ocular demonstration exceeds common fame, for now he sees what he only heard of before.

2. He is enlightened in the knowledge of sin. He hath other thoughts of it than he was wont to have. Formerly, his sight could not pierce through the cover Satan laid over it ; but now the Spirit of God strips it before him, and he sees it in its native colours, as the worst of evils, " exceeding sinful." O what deformed monsters do formerly-beloved lusts appear ! Were they right eyes, he would pluck them out : were they right hands, he would consent to their cutting off. He sees how offensive sin is to God, how destructive it is to the soul ; and calls himself fool for fighting so long against the Lord, and harbouring that destroyer as a bosom-friend.

3. He is instructed in the knowledge of himself. Regenerating grace causeth the prodigal to " come to himself," and makes men full of eyes within, knowing every one the plague of his own heart. The mind being savingly enlightened, the man sees how desperately corrupt his nature is ; what enmity against God and his holy law has long lodged there ; so that his soul loathes itself. No open sepulchre so vile and loathsome in his eyes as himself : " Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight." He is no worse than he

was before; but the sun is shining; and so these pollutions are seen, which he could not discern when there was no dawning in him, as the word is, Isa. viii. 20. while as yet the day of grace was not broken with him.

4. He is enlightened in the knowledge of Jesus Christ: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." The truth is, unregenerate men, though capable of preaching Christ, have not, properly speaking, the knowledge of him, but only an opinion, a good opinion of him; as one has of many controverted points of doctrine, wherein he is far from certainty. As when ye meet with a stranger upon the road, he behaving himself discreetly, ye conceive a good opinion of him, but yet ye will not commit your money to him; because ye do not know him: so may they think well of Christ; but they will never commit themselves to him, seeing they know him not. But saving illumination carries the soul beyond opinion, to the certain knowledge of Christ and his excellency: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." The light of grace thus discovers the suitableness of the mystery of Christ to the divine perfections, and to the sinner's case. Hence the regenerate admire the glorious plan of salvation through Christ crucified, lay their whole weight upon it, and heartily acquiesce therein; for whatever he be to others, he is to them Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

But unrenewed men, not seeing this, are offended in him ; they will not venture their souls on him, but betake themselves to the broken boards of their own righteousness. The same light convincingly discovers a superlative worth, a transcendent glory and excellency in Christ, which darken all created excellencies, as the rising sun makes the stars to hide their heads : and so it engages the merchantman to sell all that he hath, and to buy “the one pearl of great price ;” makes the soul well content to take Christ for all, and instead of all. Finally, This illumination in the knowledge of Christ, convincingly discovereth to men a fulness in him sufficient for the supply of all their wants, enough to satisfy the boundless desires of an immortal soul. They are persuaded such fulness is in him, and that in order to be communicated : they depend upon it as a certain truth, and therefore their souls take up their eternal rest in him.

5. The man is instructed in the knowledge of the vanity of the world : “I have seen an end of all perfection.” Regenerating grace elevates the soul ; sets it, as it were, amongst the stars, from whence this earth cannot but appear a little, yea, a very little thing, even as heaven appeared before, while the soul was immersed in the earth. Grace brings a man into a new world, where this world is reputed but a stage of vanity, a howling wilderness, a valley of tears. God hath hung the sign of vanity at the door of all created enjoyments ; yet how do men throng into the house, calling and looking for somewhat that is satisfying, even after it has been a thousand times told them there is no such thing in it, it is not to be got

there ! “ Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way ; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope.” Why are men so foolish ? The truth of the matter lies here, they do not see by the light of grace, they do not spiritually discern the sign of vanity. They have often indeed made a rational discovery of it : but can that truly wean the heart from the world ? Nay, no more than painted fire can burn off the prisoner’s bands. But the light of grace is the light of life, powerful and efficacious.

Lastly, (to sum up all in one word,) In regeneration the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of spiritual things : “ Ye have an unction from the Holy One,” (that is, from Jesus Christ. It is an allusion to the sanctuary, whence the holy oil was brought to anoint the priests,) “ and ye know all things,” namely, necessary to salvation. Though men be not book-learned, if they be born again they are Spirit-learned ; for all such are taught of God. The Spirit of regeneration teacheth them what they knew not before ; and what they did know as by the ear only, he teacheth them over again as by the eye. The light of grace is an overcoming light, determining men to assent to divine truths on the mere testimony of God. It is no easy thing for the mind of man to acquiesce in divine revelation. Many pretend great respect to the Scriptures, whom, nevertheless, the clear scripture-testimony will not divorce from their preconceived opinions. But this illumination will make men’s minds run, as captives, after Christ’s chariot wheels ; which, for their part, shall be allowed to drive over and cast down their own imaginations, “ and every high thing that exalteth itself against

the knowledge of God." It will make them "receive the kingdom of God as a little child," who thinks he has sufficient ground to believe any thing, if his father do but say it is so.

Secondly, The will is renewed. The Lord takes away the stony heart, and gives a heart of flesh. Regenerating grace is powerful and efficacious, and gives the will a new set. It does not indeed force it, but sweetly, yet powerfully draws it; so that "his people are willing in the day of his power." There is heavenly oratory in the Mediator's lips to persuade sinners: "Grace is poured into thy lips." There are cords of a man, and bands of love in his hands, to draw them after him. The cords of Christ's love are strong cords, and they need to be so; for Satan, together with the heart itself, draw the contrary way. But love is strong as death: and the Lord's love to the soul he died for is strongest love, which acts so powerfully, that it must come off victorious.

1. The will is cured of its utter inability to will what is good. While the opening of the prison to them that are bound is proclaimed in the gospel, the Spirit of God comes to the prison-door, opens it, goes to the prisoner, and by the power of his grace makes his chains fall off; breaks the bond of iniquity wherewith he was held in sin, so as he could neither will nor do any thing truly good; brings him forth into a large place, "working in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Then it is that the soul that was fixed to the earth can move heavenward, the withered hand is restored, and can be stretched out.

2. There is wrought in the will a fixed aversion

to evil. In regeneration a man gets “a new spirit put within him,” and that “spirit lusteth against the flesh.” The sweet morsel of sin, so greedily swallowed down, he now loathes, and would fain be rid of it; even as willingly as one that had drunk a cup of poison would throw it up again. When the spring is stopped, the mud lies in the well unmoved; but when once the spring is cleared, the waters springing up will work the mud away by degrees. Even so, while a man continues in an unregenerate state, sin lies at ease in the heart: but as soon as the Lord strikes the rocky heart with the rod of his strength in the day of conversion, grace is “in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life,” working away natural corruption, and gradually purifying the heart. The renewed will riseth up against sin, strikes at the root thereof, and the branches too. Lusts are now grievous, and the soul endeavours to starve them: the corrupt nature is the source of all evil, and therefore the soul will be often laying it before the great Physician. O what sorrow, shame, and self-loathing fill the heart, in the day that grace makes its triumphant entrance into it! for now the madman is come to himself, and the remembrance of his follies cannot but cut him to the heart.

Lastly, The will is endowed with an inclination, bent, and propensity to good. In its depraved state it lay quite another way, being prone and bent to evil only; but now, by the omnipotent all-conquering arm, it is drawn from evil to good, and gets another set. And as the former set was natural, so this is natural too, in respect of the new nature given in regeneration, which hath its own holy lustings, as

well as the corrupt old nature hath its sinful lustings. The will, as renewed, inclines and points towards God and godliness. When God made man, his will, in respect of its attention, was directed towards God, as his chief end; in respect of its choice, it pointed towards that which God willed. When man unmade himself, his will was framed into the very reverse hereof: he made himself his chief end, and his own will his law. But when man is new made in regeneration, grace rectifies this disorder in some measure, though not perfectly indeed; because we are but renewed in part while in this world. It brings back the sinner out of himself to God, as his chief end, truly, though not perfectly: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." "For me to live is Christ." It makes him to deny himself, and, whatever way he turns, to point habitually towards God, who is the centre of the gracious soul, its home, its "dwelling-place in all generations." By regenerating grace the will is framed into a conformity to the will of God. It is conformed to his preceptive will, being endowed with holy inclinations, agreeable to every one of his commands. The whole law is impressed on the gracious soul: every part of it is written over on the unrenewed heart: "For this is the covenant—I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts." And it is a covenant of salt, a perpetual covenant. It is also conformed to his providential will; so that the man will no more be master of his own process, nor carve out his lot for himself. He learns to say from his heart, The will of the Lord be done; "he shall choose our inheritance for

us.” Thus the will is disposed to fall in with those things, which, in its depraved state, it could never be reconciled to.

Particularly, (1.) The soul is reconciled to the covenant of peace. The Lord God proposeth a covenant of peace to sinners, a covenant which he himself hath framed and registered in the Bible; but they are not pleased with it, nay, an unrenewed heart cannot be pleased with it. Were it put into their hands to frame it according to their mind, they would blot many things out of it which God has put in, and put in many things God has kept out. But the renewed heart is entirely satisfied with the covenant: “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: this is all my salvation, and all my desire.” Though the covenant could not be brought down to their depraved will, their will is, by grace, brought up to the covenant: they are well pleased with it; there is nothing in it they would have out, nor is any thing left out of it which they would have in. (2.) The will is disposed to receive Christ Jesus the Lord. The soul is content to submit to him. Regenerating grace undermines, and brings down the towering imaginations of the heart raised up against its rightful Lord; it breaks the iron sinew which kept the sinner from bowing to him, and disposeth him to be no more stiff-necked, but to yield himself. He is willing to take on the yoke of Christ’s commands, to take up the cross and to follow him. He is content to take Christ on any terms: “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”

Now, the mind being savingly enlightened, and

the will renewed, the sinner is thereby determined and enabled to answer the gospel call. So the main work in regeneration is done; the fort of the heart is taken; there is room made for the Lord Jesus Christ in the innermost parts of the soul; the inner-door of the will being now opened to him, as well as the outer-door of the understanding. In one word, Christ is passively received into the heart; he is come into the soul by his quickening Spirit, whereby spiritual life is given to the man, who in himself was dead in sin. And his first vital act we may conceive to be an active receiving of Jesus Christ, discerned in his glorious excellencies; that is, a believing on him, a closing with him, as discerned, offered, and exhibited in the word of his grace, the glorious gospel; the immediate effect of which is union with him: "To as many as received him, to them gave he power (or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Christ, having taken the heart by storm, and triumphantly entered into it in regeneration, the soul by faith yields itself to him, as it is expressed, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. Thus this glorious King, who came into the heart by his Spirit, dwells in it by faith. The soul being drawn, runs; and being effectually called, comes.

Thirdly, In regeneration there is a happy change made on the affections: they are both rectified and regulated.

1. This change rectifies the affections, placing them on suitable objects: "The Lord direct your

hearts into the love of God." The regenerate man's desires are rectified: they are set on God himself, and the things above. He, who before cried with the world, "Who will show us any good?" has changed his note, and says, "Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us." Some time he saw no beauty in Christ for which he was to be desired; but now he is all he desires, he is "altogether lovely." The main stream of his desires is turned to run towards God; for there is the one thing he desireth. He desires to be holy, as well as to be happy, and rather to be gracious than great. His hopes, which before were low, and staked down to things on earth, are now raised, and set on the glory which is to be revealed. He entertains the hope of eternal life, founded on the word of promise: "Which hope he has as an anchor of the soul," fixing the heart under trials. And it puts him upon "purifying himself, even as God is pure:" for he is "begotten again unto a lively hope." His love is raised, and set on God himself, on his holy law. Though it strike against his most beloved lust, he says, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." He loves the ordinances of God: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" Being "passed from death unto life, he loves the brethren," the "people of God," as they are called, 1 Pet. ii. 10. He loves God for himself, and what is God's for his sake. Yea, as being a child of God, he loves his own enemies. His heavenly Father is compassionate and benevolent: "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust:"

and therefore he is in the like manner disposed. His hatred is turned against sin in himself and others : “ I hate the work of them that turn aside ; it shall not cleave to me.” He groans under the remains of it, and longs for deliverance : “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” His joys and delights are in God the Lord, in the light of his countenance, in his law, and in his people, because they are like him. Sin is what he chiefly fears : it is a fountain of sorrow to him now, though formerly a spring of pleasure.

2. It regulates the affections placed on suitable objects. Our affections, when placed on the creature, are naturally exorbitant ; when we joy in it, we are apt to over-joy ; and when we sorrow, we are ready to sorrow over-much : but grace keeps them within bounds, that they overflow not all their banks. It makes a “ man hate his father and mother, and wife and children,—yea, and his own life also,” comparatively ; that is, to love them less than he loves God. It also sanctifies lawful affections, bringing them forth from right principles, and directing them to right ends. There may be unholy desires after Christ and his grace ; as when men desire Christ, not from any love to him, but merely out of love to themselves. “ Give us of your oil,” said the foolish virgins, “ for our lamps are gone out.” There may be an unsanctified sorrow for sin ; as when one sorroweth for it, not because it is displeasing to God, but only because of the wrath annexed to it, as did Pharaoh, Judas, and others. But grace sanctifies the affections in such cases ; making them to run in a new channel of love to God, respect to

his commands, and regard to his glory. Again, grace raises the affections where they are too low: it gives the chief seat in them to God; and pulls down all other rivals, whether persons or things, making them lie at his feet: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." He is loved for himself; and other persons or things for his sake. What is lovely in them to the renewed heart, is some ray of the divine goodness appearing in them; for unto gracious souls they shine only by borrowed light. This accounts for the saints loving all men, and yet hating those that hate God, and contemning the wicked as vile persons. Finally, Regenerating grace sets the affections so firmly on God, that the man is disposed, at God's command, to quit his hold of every thing else, in order to keep his hold of Christ; to hate father and mother, in comparison with Christ. It makes even lawful enjoyments, like Joseph's mantle, to hang loose about a man; that he may quit them when he is in hazard to be ensnared by holding them.

If the stream of our affections was never thus turned, we are doubtless going down the stream into the pit. If "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life," have the throne in our hearts, which should be possessed by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; if we never had so much love to God as to ourselves; if sin has been somewhat bitter to us, but never so bitter as suffering, never so bitter as the pain of being weaned from it; truly we are strangers to this saving change.

Fourthly, The conscience is renewed. Now, that a new light is set up in the soul in regeneration,

conscience is enlightened, instructed, and informed. “That candle of the Lord,” is now brightened; so as it shines, and sends forth its light into the most retired corners of the heart, discovering sins which the soul was not aware of before; and, in a special manner, discovering the corruption or depravity of nature, whence all actual sins proceed. This produces the new complaint: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” That conscience which lay sleeping in the man’s bosom before, is now awakened, and makes its voice to be heard through the whole soul: and therefore there is no more rest for him in the sluggard’s bed: he must get up and be doing—arise, “haste, and escape for his life.” It powerfully incites to obedience, even in the most spiritual acts, which lay not within the view of the natural conscience; and powerfully restrains from sin, even from those sins which do not lie open to the observation of the world. It urgeth the sovereign authority of God, to which the heart is now reconciled, and which it willingly acknowledges; and so it engages the man to his duty, whatever be the hazard from the world: for it fills the heart so with the fear of God, that the force of the fear of man is broken. This hath engaged many to put their life in their hand, and follow the cause of religion they once contemned, and resolutely walk in the path they formerly abhorred: “He which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.” Guilt now makes the conscience to smart. It hath bitter remorse for sins past, which fills the soul with anxiety, sorrow, and self-loathing. And every new reflection on these

sins, is apt to affect, and make its wounds bleed afresh with regret. It is made tender in point of sin and duty, for the time to come: and fears to break the hedge, where it was formerly bit by the serpent. Finally, The renewed conscience drives the sinner to Jesus Christ, as the only physician that can draw out the sting of guilt, and whose blood alone can “purge the conscience from dead works,” refusing all ease offered to it from any other hand.

Fifthly, As the memory wanted not its share of depravity, it is also bettered by regenerating grace. The memory is weakened with respect to those things that are not worth their room therein; and men are taught to forget injuries, and drop their resentments: “Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you—that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.” It is strengthened for spiritual things. We have Solomon’s receipt for an ill memory: “My son,” saith he, “forget not my law.” But how shall it be kept in mind? “Let thine heart keep my commandments.” Grace makes a heart-memory, even where there is no good head-memory: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart.” The heart truly touched with the powerful sweetness of truth, will help the memory to retain what is so relished. Did divine truths make deeper impressions on our hearts, they would thereby impress themselves with more force on our memories: “I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me.” Grace sanctifies the memory. Many have large, but unsanctified memories: which serve only to gather knowledge, whereby to aggravate their condemnation; but the

renewed memory serves to “remember his commandments to do them.” It is a sacred store-house, from whence a Christian is furnished in his way to Zion; for faith and hope are often supplied out of it in a dark hour. It is the store-house of former experiences; and these are the believer’s way-marks, by noticing of which he comes to know where he is, even in a dark time: “O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan,” &c. It also helps the soul to godly sorrow and self-loathing, presenting old guilt anew before the conscience, and making it bleed afresh, though the sin be already pardoned: “Remember not the sins of my youth.” And where unpardoned guilt is lying on the sleeping conscience, it is often employed to bring in a word, which in a moment sets the whole soul astir: as when “Peter remembered the words of Jesus—he went out and wept bitterly.” The word of God laid up in a sanctified memory, serves a man to resist temptations, puts the sword in his hand against the spiritual enemies, and is a light to direct his steps in the way of religion and righteousness.

Sixthly, There is a change made on the body, and the members thereof, in respect of their use: they are consecrated to the Lord. Even “the body is—for the Lord.” It is “the temple of the Holy Ghost.” The members thereof, that were formerly “instruments of unrighteousness unto sin,” become “instruments of righteousness unto God,—servants to righteousness unto holiness.” The eye, that conveyed sinful imaginations into the heart, is under a covenant to do so no more, but to serve the soul in

viewing the works and reading the word of God. The ear, that had often let sin in, is turned to be the gate of life, by which the word of life enters the soul. The tongue, that set on fire the whole course of nature, is restored to the office it was designed for by the Creator; namely, to be an instrument of glorifying him, and setting forth his praise. In a word, the whole man is for God, in soul and body, which by this blessed change are made his.

Lastly, This gracious change shines forth in the conversation. Even the outward man is renewed. A new heart makes newness of life. When "the King's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold." The single eye "makes the whole body full of light." This change will appear in every part of one's conversation, particularly in these following things:—

1. In the change of his company. Though sometimes he despised the company of the saints, now they are "the excellent, in whom is all his delight." "I am a companion of all that fear thee," saith the royal Psalmist. A renewed man joins himself with the saints; for he and they are like-minded, in that which is their main work and business; they have all one new nature; they are travelling to Emmanuel's land, and converse together in the language of Canaan. In vain do men pretend to religion, while ungodly company is their choice; for "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Religion will make a man shy of throwing himself into an ungodly family, or any unnecessary familiarity with wicked men; as one that is clean will beware of going into an infected house.

2. In his relative capacity he will be a new man. Grace makes men gracious in their several relations; and natively leads them to the conscientious performance of relative duties. It does not only make good men, and good women; but makes good subjects, good husbands, good wives, children, servants; and, in a word, good relatives in the church, commonwealth, and family. It is a just exception made against the religion of many, namely, that they are bad relatives, they are ill husbands, wives, masters, servants, &c. How will we prove ourselves to be new creatures, if we be still but just as we were before in our several relations? "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Real godliness will gain a testimony to a man from the consciences of his nearest relations, though they know more of his sinful infirmities than others do, as we see in that case: "Thy servant my husband is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord:" 2 Kings iv. 1.

3. In the way of his following his worldly business there is a great change. It appears to be no more his all, as some time it was. Though saints apply themselves to worldly business, as well as others, yet their hearts are not swallowed up in it. It is evident they are carrying on a trade with heaven, as well as a trade with earth: "For our conversation is in heaven." And they go about their employment in the world as a duty laid upon them by the Lord of all; doing their lawful business as the will of God, working because he has said, "Thou shalt not steal."

4. They have a special concern for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world: they espouse the interests of religion, and “prefer Jerusalem above their chiefest joy.” How privately soever they live, grace gives them a public spirit, which will concern itself in the ark and work of God, in the gospel of God, and in the people of God, even those of them whom they never saw in the face. As children of God, they naturally care for these things; they have a new and unwonted concern for the spiritual good of others: and no sooner do they taste of the power of grace themselves, but they are inclined to set up to be agents for Christ and holiness in the world; as appears in the case of the woman of Samaria, who, when Christ had manifested himself to her, “went her way into the city, and saith unto the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” They have seen and felt the evil of sin, and therefore pity the world lying in wickedness. They would fain pluck the brands out of the fire, remembering that they themselves were plucked out of it. They will labour to commend religion to others, both by word and example; and rather deny themselves their liberty in indifferent things, than, by the uncharitable use of it, destroy others: “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

5. In their use of lawful comforts there is a great change. They rest not in them, as their end; but use them, as means to help them in their way. They draw their satisfaction from the higher springs,

even while the lower springs are running. Thus Hannah, having obtained a son, rejoiced not so much in the gift, as in the Giver: "And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord." Yea, when the comforts of life are gone, they can subsist without them, and "rejoice in the Lord, although the fig-tree do not blossom." Grace teacheth to use the conveniences of a present life passingly, and to show a holy moderation in all things.

Lastly, This change shines forth in the man's performance of religious duties. He who lived in the neglect of them, will do so no more, if once the grace of God enter into his heart. If a man be new born, he will "desire the sincere milk of the word." Whenever the prayerless person gets the Spirit of grace, he will be in him "a spirit of supplication." It is as natural for one that is born again to fall a praying, as for the new-born babe to fall a crying: "Behold, he prayeth." His heart will be a temple for God, and his house a church. His devotion, which before was superficial and formal, is now spiritual and lively; forasmuch as heart and tongue are touched with a live-coal from heaven: and he rests not in the mere performing of duties, as careful only to get his task done; but in every duty seeketh communion with God in Christ, justly considering them as means appointed of God for that end, and reckoning himself disappointed if he miss of it.

The resemblance betwixt Natural and Spiritual generation.

II. I come to show why this change is called *re-generation*, a being *born again*. It is so called,

because of the resemblance betwixt natural and spiritual generation:—

1. Natural generation is a mysterious thing; and so is spiritual generation: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” The work of the Spirit is felt, but his way of working is a mystery we cannot comprehend. A new light is let into the mind, and the will is renewed; but how that light is conveyed thither, how the will is fettered with cords of love, and how the rebel is made a willing captive, we can no more tell, than we can tell “how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child.” As a man hears the sound of the wind, and finds it stirring, but knows not where it begins, and where it ends; “so is every one that is born of the Spirit:” he finds the change that is made upon him, but how it is produced he knoweth not. One thing he may know, that “whereas he was blind, now he seeth;” but “the seed of grace doth spring and grow up he knoweth not how.”

2. In both, the creature comes to a being it had not before. Regeneration is not so much the curing of a sick man, as “the quickening of a dead man.” Man, in his depraved state, is a mere non-entity in grace; and is brought into a new being, by the power of him “who calleth things that be not, as though they were—being created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Therefore our Lord Jesus, to give ground of hope to the Laodiceans in their wretched and miserable state, proposeth himself as “the beginning of the creation of God;” namely,

the active beginning of it: “for all things were made by him” at first. From whence they might gather, that the same hand that made them his creatures, could make them new creatures.

3. As the child is merely passive in generation, so is the child of God in regeneration. The one contributes nothing to its own generation; neither does the other contribute any thing, by way of efficiency, to its own regeneration: for though a man lay himself down at the pool, yet he hath no hand in moving of the water, no efficacy in performing of the cure. God leaves some in their depraved state; others he brings into a state of grace or regeneracy. If thou be thus honoured, no thanks to thee: for “who maketh thee to differ from another?”

4. There is a wonderful contexture of parts in both births. Admirable is the structure of man’s body, in which there is such a variety of organs,—nothing wanting, nothing superfluous. The Psalmist, considering his own body, looks on it as a piece of marvellous work, Ps. cxxxix. “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” In natural generation we are curiously wrought—as a piece of needle work, as the word imports—even so it is in regeneration, Ps. xlv. “She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work,”—raiment curiously wrought. It is the same word in both texts. And what that raiment is, the apostle tells us. It is the “new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” That is the raiment, he saith in the same place, we must put on; not excluding the-imputed righteousness of Christ. Both are curiously wrought, as master-pieces of the manifold wisdom of God. O the won-

derful contexture of graces in the new creature! O glorious creature, new-made after the image of God! It is grace for grace in Christ, which makes up this new man, even as the child has every member the parent has, in a certain proportion.

5. All this, in both cases, hath its rise from that which is in itself very small and inconsiderable. A man gets a word at a sermon, which hundreds beside him hear and let slip: but it remains with him, works in him, and never leaves him, till he become a new man. It is like the vapour that got up into Ahasuerus's head, and cut off sleep from his eyes, which proved a spring of such motions as never ceased, until Mordecai, in royal pomp, was brought on horseback through the streets, proud Haman trudging at his foot; the same Haman afterwards hanged, Mordecai advanced, and the church delivered from Haman's hellish plot: "The grain of mustard seed—becometh a tree." God loves to bring great things out of small beginnings.

6. Natural generation is carried on by degrees. It is with the soul ordinarily, in regeneration, as with the blind man cured by our Lord, who first "saw men as trees walking," afterwards saw every man clearly. It is true, regeneration being, strictly speaking, a passing from death to life, the soul is quickened in a moment. Nevertheless, we may imagine somewhat like conception in spiritual generation, whereby the soul is prepared for quickening, and the new creature is capable of growth, and of life more abundantly.

7. In both there are new relations. The regenerate may call God, Father; for they are his chil-

dren, “begotten of him.” The bride, the Lamb’s wife, (that is, the church,) is their mother. They are related, as brethren, as sisters, to angels and glorified saints, the family of heaven. They are of the heavenly stock: and the meanest of them, “the base things of the world,” the kinless things, (as the word imports,) who cannot boast of the blood that runs in their veins, are yet, by their new birth, near of kin with the excellent in the earth.

8. There is a likeness betwixt a parent and the child. Every thing that generates; generates its like; and the regenerate are “partakers of the divine nature.” The moral perfections of the divine nature are, in measure and degree, communicated to the renewed soul: and thus the divine image is retrieved; so that, as the child resembles the father, the new creature resembles God himself, being “holy as he is holy.”

Lastly, As there is no birth without pain, both to the mother and to the child, so there is great pain in bringing forth the new creature. The soul hath sore pains when under conviction and humiliation: “A wounded spirit who can bear?” The mother is pained, “Zion travails,” she sighs, groans, crieth, and hath hard labour in her ministers and members, to bring forth children to her Lord: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you.” And never was a mother more feelingly touched with joy, “that a man-child was born into the world,” than she is upon the new birth of her children. But, what is more remarkable than all this, we read, not only of our Lord Jesus Christ’s travail (or toil) of soul, Isa. liii. 11. but (what lies

more directly to our purpose) of his pains, or pangs, as of one travailing in child-birth; so the word used, Acts ii. 24. properly signifies. Well may he call the new creature, as Rachel called her dear-bought son, Benoni, that is, the son of my sorrow: and as she called another Naphtali, that is, my wrestling; for the pangs of that travail put him to “strong crying and tears,” yea, into “an agony and bloody sweat.” And, in the end, he died of these pangs, they became to him the pains of death.

The Doctrine of Regeneration applied.

USE I.—By what is said, you may try whether you are in the state of grace or not. If ye be brought out of the state of wrath or ruin, into the state of grace or salvation, ye are new creatures, ye are born again. But ye will say, ‘How shall we know whether we are born again or not?’ *Ans.* Did you ask me if the sun were risen, and how you should know whether it were arisen or not? I would bid you look up to the heavens, and see it with your eyes. And would ye know if the light be risen in your heart? Look in and see. Grace is light, and discovers itself. Look into thy mind, see if it has been illuminated in the knowledge of God. Hast thou been inwardly taught what God is? were thine eyes ever turned inward to see thyself, the sinfulness of thy depraved state, the corruption of thy nature, the sins of thy heart and life? wast thou ever let into a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin? have thine eyes seen King Jesus in his beauty, the manifold wisdom of God in him, his transcendent excellency, and absolute fulness and sufficiency, with

the vanity and emptiness of all things else? Next, What change is there on thy will? are thy fetters taken off, wherewith it was sometimes bound up from moving heavenwards? and has thy will got a new set? dost thou find an aversion to sin, and a proneness to good wrought in thy heart? is thy soul turned towards God as thy chief end? is thy will new-modelled into some measure of conformity to the preceptive and providential will of God? art thou heartily reconciled to the covenant of peace, and fixedly disposed to the receiving of Christ, as he is offered in the gospel? And as to a change on your affections, are they rectified, and placed on right objects? are your desires going out after God? are they to his name, and remembrance of him? are your hopes in him? is your love set upon him, and your hatred set against him? does your offending a good God affect your heart with sorrow? and do you fear sin more than suffering? are your affections regulated? are they, with respect to created comforts, brought down, as being too high; and with respect to God in Christ, brought up, as being too low? has he the chief seat in your heart? and are all your lawful worldly comforts and enjoyments laid at his feet? has thy conscience been enlightened and awakened, refusing all ease but from the application of the blood of a Redeemer? is thy memory sanctified, thy body consecrated to the service of God? and art thou now walking in newness of life? Thus ye may discover, whether ye are born again or not.

But, for your further help in this matter, I will discourse a little of another sign of regeneration, namely, "the love of the brethren;" an evidence

whereby the weakest and most timorous saints have often had comfort, when they could have little or no consolation from other marks proposed to them. Thus the apostle lays down: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It is not to be thought, that the apostle, by "the brethren," in this place, means brethren by a common relation to the first Adam, but to the second Adam, Christ Jesus: because, however true it is that universal benevolence, a good will to the whole race of mankind, takes place in the renewed soul, as being a lively lineament of the divine image, yet the whole context speaks of those that are "the sons of God,—children of God,—born of God;" distinguishing betwixt "the children of God," and "the children of the devil;" betwixt those that are of the devil, and those that are of God. And the text itself comes in as a reason why we should not marvel that the world hates the brethren, the children of God. How can we marvel at it, seeing the love of the brethren is an evidence of one's having passed from death unto life?

Now, in order to set this mark of regeneration in a true light, consider these three things: (1.) This love to the brethren is a love to them as such. Then do we love them, in the sense of the text, when the grace or image of God in them is the chief motive of our love to them. When we love the godly for their godliness, the saints for their sanctity or holiness, then we love God in them, and so may conclude we are born of God; for "every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Hypocrites may love saints on account

of a civil relation to them, because of their obliging conversation, for their being of the same opinion with themselves in religious matters, and on many other such like accounts, whereby wicked men may be induced to love the godly. But happy they who can love them for naked grace in them; for their heaven-born temper and disposition. (2.) It is a love that will be given to all in whom the grace of God appears. They that love one saint, because he is a saint, will have "love to all the saints." They will love all who, to their discerning, bear the image of God. They that cannot love a gracious person in rags, but confine their love to those of them who wear gay clothing, have not this love to the brethren in them. Those who confine their love to a party, to whom God has not confined his grace, are souls too narrow to be put among the children. In what points soever men differ from us in their judgment or way, yet if they appear to agree with us in love to God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and in bearing his image, we will love them as brethren, if we ourselves be of the heavenly family. And, (3.) If this love be in us, the more grace any person appears to be possessed of, he will be the more beloved by us. The more vehemently the holy fire of grace doth flame in any, the hearts of true Christians will be the more warmed in love to them. It is not with the saints as with many other men, who make themselves the standard for others, and love them so far as they think they are like themselves. But if they seem to out-shine and darken them, their love is turned to hatred and envy, and they endeavour to detract from the due praise of their exemplary piety;

because nothing relisheth with them in the practice of religion, that goes beyond their own measure : what of the life and power of religion appears in others, serves only to raise the serpentine grudge in their pharisaical hearts. But as for them that are born again, their love and affection to the brethren bears proportion to the degrees of the divine image they discern in them.

Now, if ye would improve these things to the knowledge of your state, I would advise you, (1.) To set apart some time for a review of your case, and try your state by what has been said. Many have comfort and clearness as to their state, at a sermon, who in a little time lose it again ; because, while they hear the word preached, they make application of it, but do not consider of these things more deliberately and leisurely when alone. The action is too sudden and short, to give lasting comfort ; and it is often so indeliberate, that it has bad consequences. Therefore, set about this work at home, after earnest and serious prayer to God for his help in it. (2.) Renew your repentance before the Lord. Guilt lying on the conscience unrepented of, may darken all your evidences and marks of grace. It provokes the Spirit of grace to depart ; and when he goes, our light ceases. It is not fit time for a saint to read his evidences, when the candle is blown out by some conscience-wounding guilt. Lastly, Exert the powers of the new nature ; let the graces of the divine Spirit in you discover themselves by action. If ye would know whether there is a sacred fire in your breast or not, ye must blow the coal : for although it be a live-coal, yet, if it be under the ashes, it will give you

no light. Settle in your hearts a firm purpose, through the grace that is in Christ Jesus, to comply with every known duty, and watch against every known sin, having a readiness of mind to be instructed in what ye know not. If gracious souls would thus manage their inquiries into their states, it is likely they would have a comfortable issue; and if others would take such a solemn review, and make trial of their state impartially, sisting themselves before the tribunal of their own consciences, they might have a timely discovery of their own naughtiness: but the neglect of self-examination leaves most men under sad delusions as to their state, and deprives many saints of the comfortable sight of the grace of God in them.

But, that I may afford some further help to true Christians in their inquiries into their state, I shall propose and briefly answer some cases or doubts, which may possibly hinder some persons from the comfortable view of their happy state.

Case 1. I doubt if I be regenerate; because I know not the precise time of my conversion, nor can I trace the particular steps in the way in which it was brought to pass. *Ans.* Though it is very desirable to be able to give an account of the beginning, and the gradual advances of the Lord's work upon our souls, as some saints can distinctly do, (howbeit the manner of the Spirit's working is still a mystery,) yet this is not necessary to evidence the truth of grace. Happy he that can say in this case, as the blind man in the gospel, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Like as, when we see flame, we know there is fire, though we know not

how or when it began; so the truth of grace in us may be discerned, though we know not how or when it was dropped into our hearts. If thou canst perceive the happy change which is wrought in thy soul: if thou findest thy mind is enlightened, thy mind inclined to comply with the will of God in all things, especially to fall in with the divine plan of salvation, through a crucified Redeemer; in vain dost thou trouble thyself, and refuse comfort, because thou knowest not how and what way it was brought about.

Case 2. If I were a new creature, sin could not prevail against me as it doth. *Ans.* Though we must not lay pillows for hypocrites to rest their heads upon, who indulge themselves in their sins, and make the doctrine of God's grace subservient to their lusts, lying down contentedly in the bond of iniquity, yet it must be owned, the just man falleth seven times a-day, and iniquity may prevail against the children of God. But if thou art groaning under the weight of the body of death, the corruption of thy nature, loathing thyself for the sins of thy heart and life, striving to mortify thy lusts, fleeing daily to the blood of Christ for pardon, and looking to his Spirit, for sanctification; though thou mayest be obliged to say with the Psalmist, "Iniquities prevail against me;" yet thou mayest add with him, "As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." The new creature doth not yet possess the house alone: it dwells beside remaining corruption, the relics of depraved nature. These struggle together for the mastery: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." And sometimes corruption

prevails, bringing the child of God “into captivity to the law of sin.” Let not, therefore, the prevailing of corruption make thee in this case conclude thou art none of God’s children; but let it humble thee to be the more watchful, and to thirst the more intensely after Jesus Christ, his blood and Spirit; and that very disposition will evidence a principle of grace in thee, which seeks the destruction of sin that prevails so often against thee.

Case 3. I find the motions of sin, in my heart, more violent, since the Lord began his work on my soul, than they were before that time. Can this consist with a change of my nature? *Ans.* Dreadful is the case of many, who, after God has had a remarkable dealing with their souls, tending to their reformation, have thrown off all bonds, and have become grossly and openly immoral and profane, as if the devil had returned into their hearts with seven spirits worse than himself. All I shall say to such persons is, that their state is exceeding dangerous: they are in danger of sinning against the Holy Ghost; therefore let them repent, before it be too late. But if it be not thus with you, though corruption is bestirring itself more violently than formerly, as if all the forces of hell were raised to hold fast, or bring back a fugitive; I say, these stirrings may consist with a change of your nature. When the restraint of grace is newly laid upon corruption, it is no wonder if this last acts more vigorously than before, “warring against the law of the mind.” The motions of sin may really be most violent, when a new principle is brought in to cast it out. And as the sun, sending its beams through the window,

discovers the moles in the house, which were not seen before ; so the light of grace may discover the risings and actings of corruption, in another manner than ever the man saw them before. Sin is not quite dead in the regenerate soul, it is but dying : and dying a lingering death, being crucified, no wonder there be great fightings, when it is sick at the heart, and death is at the door. Besides, temptations may be more in number, and stronger, while Satan is striving to bring you back who are escaped, than while he endeavoured only to retain you : “ After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions,” says the apostle to the Hebrews : but “ cast not away your confidence.” Remember his “ grace is sufficient for you, and the God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Pharaoh and his Egyptians never made such a formidable appearance against the Israelites as at the Red Sea, after they were brought out of Egypt : but then were the pursuers nearest to a total overthrow. Let not this case therefore make you raze your foundations : but be ye emptied of yourselves, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and ye shall come off victorious.

Case 4. But when I compare my love to God, with my love to some created enjoyments, I find the pulse of my affections beat stronger to the creature than the Creator. How then can I call him Father ? Nay, alas ! these turnings of heart within me, and glowings of affection to him, which sometimes I had, are gone ; so that I fear, all the love I ever had to the Lord, has been but a fit of affection, such as hypocrites often have. *Ans.* It cannot be denied, that the predominant love of the world, is a certain mark

of an unregenerate state : “ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Nevertheless, those are not always the strongest affections which are most violent. A man’s affections may be more moved on some occasions by an object that is little regarded, than by another that is exceedingly beloved ; even as a little brook sometimes makes a greater noise than a great river. The strength of our affections is to be measured by the firmness and fixedness of the root, not by the violence of their actings. Suppose a person meeting with a friend who has been long abroad, finds his affections more vehemently acting towards his friend on that occasion, than towards his own wife and children ; will he therefore say, that he loves his friend more than them ? Surely not. Even so, although the Christian may find himself more moved in his love to the creature than to God, yet he is not therefore to be said to love the creature more than God ; seeing love to God is always more firmly rooted in a gracious heart, than love to any created enjoyment ; as appears when competition arises in such a manner, that the one or the other is to be foregone. Would you then know your case ? Retire into your own hearts, and there lay the two in the balance, and try which of them weighs down the other. Ask thyself, as in the sight of God, whether thou wouldst part with Christ for the creature, or part with the creature for Christ ? If you find your heart disposed to part with what is dearest to you in the world for Christ, you have no reason to conclude you love the creature more than God, but that you love God more than the creature ; albeit

you do not feel such violent motions in the love of God, as in the love of some created things. “He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.” “If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple.” From which we may infer, that he who is ready to part with father and mother for Christ, is, in our Lord’s account, one that loves them less than him. Moreover, ye are to consider there is a twofold love to Christ. (1.) There is a sensible love to him, which is felt as a dart in the heart, and makes a holy love-sickness in the soul, arising either from want of enjoyment, as in that case of the spouse: “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love;” or else from the fulness of it, as in that case, “Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love.” These glowings of affection are usually wrought in young converts, who are ordinarily made “to sing in the days of their youth.” While the fire-edge is upon the young convert, he looks upon others reputed to be godly, and not finding them in such a temper and disposition as himself, he is ready to censure them, and to think there is far less religion in the world than indeed there is. But when he finds that in himself which made him question the state of others, he is more humbled, and feels more and more the necessity of daily recourse to the blood of Christ for pardon, and to the Spirit of Christ for sanctification; and thus grows downward in humiliation, self-loathing, and self-denial. (2.) There is a rational love to Christ, which, without these sensible emotions felt in the former case, evi-

dences itself by a dutiful regard to the divine authority and command. When one bears such a love to Christ, though the vehement stirrings of affection be wanting, yet he is truly tender of offending a gracious God, endeavours to walk before him to all well-pleasing, and is grieved at the heart for what is displeasing to him: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Now, although that sensible love doth not always continue with you, yet ye have no reason to account it a hypocritical fit, while the rational love remains with you, more than a faithful and loving wife needs question her love to her husband, when her fondness is abated.

Case 5. The attainments of hypocrites and apostates are a terror to me, and come like a shaking storm on me, when I am about to conclude, from the marks of grace which I seem to find in myself, that I am in the state of grace. *Ans.* These things should indeed stir us up to a most serious and impartial examination of ourselves, but ought not to keep us in a continued suspense as to our state. Ye see the outside of hypocrites, their duties, their gifts, their tears, &c. but ye see not their inside, ye do not discern their hearts, the bias of their spirits. Upon what ye see of them, ye found a judgment of charity as to their state; and ye do well to judge charitably in such a case, because ye cannot know the secret springs of their actings: but ye are seeking, and ought to have a judgment of certainty as to your own state; and therefore are to look into that part of religion, which none in the world but yourselves can discern in you, and which ye can as little see in others. A hypocrite's religion may ap-

pear far greater than that of a sincere soul: but that which makes the greatest figure in the eyes of men, is often least worth before God. I would rather utter one of those groans the apostle speaks of, Rom. viii. 26. than shed Esau's tears, have Balaam's prophetic spirit, or the joy of the stony-ground hearers. It is impossible for you, without divine revelation, certainly to know of what sort another man's religion is; but you may certainly know what sort your own is of, without extraordinary revelation; otherwise the apostle would not exhort the saints to "give diligence to make their calling and election sure." Therefore, the attainments of hypocrites and apostates should not disturb you in your serious inquiry into your own state. But I will tell you two things wherein the meanest saints go beyond the most refined hypocrites: (1.) In denying themselves; renouncing all confidence in themselves, and their own works; acquiescing in, and venturing their souls upon God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (2.) In a real hatred of all sin; being willing to part with every lust, without exception, and to comply with every duty the Lord makes known to them: "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Try yourselves by these.

Case 6. I see myself fall so short of the saints mentioned in the Scriptures, and of several excellent

persons of my own acquaintance, that, when I look on them, I can hardly look on myself as one of the same family with them. *Ans.* It is indeed matter of humiliation, that we do not get forward to that measure of grace and holiness which we see is attainable in this life. This should make us more vigorously press towards the mark: but surely it is from the devil, that weak Christians make a rack for themselves of the attainments of the strong. And to yield to this temptation is as unreasonable as for a child to dispute his relation to his father, because he is not of the same stature with his elder brethren. There are in Christ's family, fathers, young men, and little children.

Case 7. I never read in the word of God, nor did I ever know of a child of God so tempted, and so left of God as I am; and therefore no saint's case being mine, I cannot but conclude I am none of their number. *Ans.* This objection arises to some from their unacquaintedness with the Scriptures, and with experienced Christians. It is profitable, in this case, to impart the matter to some experienced Christian friend, or to some godly minister. This has been a blessed mean of peace to some; while their case, which appeared to them to be singular, has been evinced to have been the case of other saints. The Scripture gives instances of very horrid temptations, wherewith the saints have been assaulted. Job was tempted to blaspheme: this was the great thing the devil aimed at in the case of that great saint, "He will curse thee to thy face." "Curse God and die." Asaph was tempted to think it was in vain to be religious, which was in effect to throw off all religion;

“ Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain.” And many of the children of God have not only been attacked with, but have actually yielded to very gross temptations for a time. Peter denied Christ, and cursed and swore that he knew him not. Paul, when a persecutor, compelled even saints to blaspheme. Many of the saints can, from their sad experience, bear witness to very gross temptations, which have astonished their spirits, and made their very flesh to tremble. Satan’s fiery darts make terrible work; and will cost pains to quench them, by a vigorous management of the “ shield of faith.” Sometimes he makes such desperate attacks, that never was one more put to it to quench the fire-balls incessantly thrown into his house, by an enemy designing to burn it, than the poor tempted saint is to repel satanical injections. But these injections, these horrid temptations, though they are a dreadful affliction, are not the sins of the tempted, unless they make them theirs by consenting to them. They will be charged upon the tempter alone, if they be not consented to.

But suppose neither minister nor private Christian to whom you go, can tell you of any who has been in your case, yet you ought not thence to infer that your case certainly is singular, far less to give over hopes: for it is not to be thought that every godly minister, or private Christian, has had experience of all the cases a child of God may be in: and we need not doubt but some have had distresses known only to God and their own consciences. Yea, and though the Scriptures do contain suitable directions for every case a child of God can be in, and

these illustrated with a sufficient number of examples, yet it is not to be imagined, that there are in the Scriptures perfect instances of every particular case incident to the saints. Therefore, though you cannot find an instance of your case in the Scripture, yet bring your case to it, and you shall find suitable remedies prescribed there for it. And study rather to make use of Christ for your case, who has salve for all sores, than to know if ever any was in your case. Though one should show you an instance of your case in an undoubted saint, yet none could promise it would certainly give you ease: for a scrupulous conscience would readily find out some difference. And if nothing but a perfect conformity of another's case to yours will satisfy, it will be hard, if not impossible, to satisfy you. Wherefore I conclude, that if you can find in yourselves the marks of regeneration proposed to you from the word, you ought to conclude you are in the state of grace, though your case were singular.

Case last. The afflictions I meet with are strange and unusual. I doubt if ever a child of God was tried with such dispensations of providence as I am.

Ans. Much of what was said on the preceding case may be helpful in this. Holy Job was assaulted with this temptation: "To which of the saints wilt thou turn?" but he rejected it, and held fast his integrity. The apostle supposeth Christians may be tempted to "think strange concerning the fiery trial." But they have need of larger experience than Solomon's, who will venture to say, "See this is new." And what though, in respect of the outward dispensations of providence, "it happen to you

according to the work of the wicked?" you may be just notwithstanding; according to Solomon's observation, Eccles. viii. 14. Although thou canst not perceive the footsteps of the flock in the way of thine affliction, thou mayest not therefore conclude thou art the first that ever travelled that road. But what if it were so, that thou wert indeed the first? some one saint or other behooved to be first in drinking of each bitter cup the rest have drunk of. What warrant have you or I to "limit the holy One of Israel" to a trodden path in his dispensations towards us? "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Learn to allow sovereignty a latitude; be at your duty; and let no affliction cast a veil over any evidences you otherwise have for your being in the state of grace: for "no man knoweth either their love or hatred, by all that is before them."

USE II.—Ye that are strangers to this new birth, be convinced of the absolute necessity of it. Are all in the state of grace born again? Then you have neither part nor lot in it who are not born again. I must tell you, in the words of our Lord and Saviour, (and O that he would speak them to your hearts!) ye must "be born again." And, for your conviction, consider these few things:—

First, Regeneration is absolutely necessary to qualify you to do any thing really good and acceptable to God. While you are not born again, your best works are but glistening sins; for though the matter of them is good, they are quite marred in the making. Consider, (I.) That without regeneration there is no faith, and "without faith it is

impossible to please God." Faith is a vital act of the new-born soul. The evangelist, showing the different entertainment our Lord Jesus had from different persons, some receiving him, some rejecting him, points at regenerating grace as the true rise of that difference, without which never one would have received him. He tells us, that "as many as received him," were those "which were born of God."

Unregenerate men may presume; but true faith they cannot have. Faith is a flower that grows not in the field of nature. As the tree cannot grow without a root, neither can a man believe without the new nature, whereof the principle of believing is a part.

(2.) Without regeneration a man's works are dead works. As is the principle, so must the effects be; and he who at best is dead in sin, his works at best will be but dead works. "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure—being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

Could we say of a man, that he is more blameless in his life than any other in the world; that he macerates his body with fasting, and has made his knees as horns with continual praying; but he is not born again? that exception would mar all: as if one should say, there is a well-proportioned body, but the soul is gone, it is but a dead lump. This is a melting consideration! Thou dost many things materially good: but God saith, All these things avail not as long as I see the old nature reigning in the man, "for in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

If thou art not born again, (1.) All thy reformation is nought in the sight of God. It may be,

thou art not what once thou wast: yet thou art not what thou must be, if ever thou seest heaven; for, “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (2.) Thy prayers are “an abomination to the Lord.” It may be, others admire thy seriousness: thou criest as for thy life; but God accounts of the opening of thy mouth as one would account of the opening of a grave full of rottenness: “Their throat is an open sepulchre.” Others are affected with thy prayers, which seem to them as if they would rend the heavens; but God accounts them but as the howling of a dog: “They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds.” Others take thee for a wrestler and prevailer with God; but he can take no delight in thee, nor thy prayers either: “He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck;—he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.” Why, but because thou art yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity? (3.) All thou hast done for God and his cause in the world, though it may be followed with temporal rewards, yet is lost as to divine acceptance. This is clear from the case of Jehu, who was indeed rewarded with a kingdom for his executing due vengeance upon the house of Ahab; as being a work good for the matter of it, because it was commanded of God, as you may see, 2 Kings x. 13.; yet he was punished for it in his posterity, because he did it not in a right manner: “I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.” God looks mainly to the heart; and if so, though thy outward appearance be fairer than that of many

others, yet the hidden man of thy heart is loathsome : thou lookest well before men, but art not, as Moses was, fair to God, as the margin hath it, Acts vii. 20. O what a difference is there betwixt the characters of Asa and Amaziah ! “ The high places were not removed : nevertheless Asa’s heart was perfect with the Lord all his days.” “ Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.” It may be thou art zealous against sin in others, and dost admonish them of their duty, and reprove them for their sin ; and they hate thee because thou dost thy duty : but I must tell thee, God hates thee too, because thou dost it not in a right manner : and that thou canst never do, whilst thou art not born again. Lastly, All thy struggles against sin in thine own heart and life are nought. The proud Pharisee afflicted his body with fasting, and God struck his soul in the meantime with a sentence of condemnation. Balaam struggled with his covetous temper to that degree, that though he loved the wages of unrighteousness, yet he would not win them by cursing Israel ; but he died the death of the wicked. All thou dost, while in an unregenerate state, is for thyself ; and therefore it will fare with thee as with a subject, who, having reduced the rebels, puts the crown on his own head ; and therefore loseth all his good service, and his head too.

Object. If it be thus with us, then we need never perform any religious duty at all. *Ans.* The conclusion is not just. No inability of thine can loose thee from the duty God’s law lays on thee ; and there is less evil in thy doing thy duty, than there is in the omitting of it. But there is a difference be-

twixt omitting of duty, and the doing of it as thou dost it. A man ordereth masons to build him a house: if they quite neglect the work, that will not be accepted; if they fall on and build upon the old rotten foundation, neither will that please: but they must raze the old foundation, and build on firm ground. Go thou and do likewise. In the meantime, it is not in vain for thee, even for thee, to seek the Lord: for though he regards thee not, yet he may have respect to his own ordinance, and do thee good thereby.

Secondly, Without regeneration there is no communion with God. There is a society on earth, whose "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." But out of that society all the unregenerate are excluded; for they are all enemies to God. Now, "can two walk together, except they be agreed?" They are all unholy; and "what communion hath light with darkness—Christ with Belial?" They may have a show and semblance of holiness; but they are strangers to true holiness, and therefore without God in the world. How sad is this case—to be employed in religious duties, but to have no fellowship with God in them! Ye would not be content with your meat unless it fed you; and how can you satisfy yourselves with your duties, while they are not effectual to your communion with God?

Thirdly, Regeneration is absolutely necessary to qualify you for heaven. None go to heaven but they that are made meet for it. As it was with Solomon's temple, so it is with the temple above: "it is built of stone made ready before it is brought thither," namely, of lively stones, "wrought for the

self-same thing ;” for they cannot be laid in that glorious building just as they came out of the quarry of depraved nature. Jewels of gold are not meet for swine, and far less jewels of glory for unrenewed sinners.

The unregenerate would find fault with heaven on several accounts. As, (1.) That it is a strange country. Heaven is the renewed man’s native country : his Father is in heaven, “ his mother is Jerusalem, which is above.” He is born from above. Heaven is his home, therefore he looks upon himself as a stranger on this earth : “ They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.” But the unregenerate man is the man of the earth, “ written in the earth ;” therefore he “ minds earthly things.” There is a peculiar sweetness in our native soil ; and hardly are men drawn to leave it, and dwell in a strange country. In no case does that prevail more than in this : for unrenewed men would quit their pretensions to heaven, were it not that they see they cannot make a better of it. (2.) There is nothing there of what they delight most in, as most agreeable to the carnal heart : “ And there shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth.” When Mahomet gave out paradise to be a place of sensual delights, his religion was greedily embraced ; for that is the heaven men naturally choose. If the covetous man could get bags full of gold there, and the voluptuous man could promise himself his sensual delights there, they might be reconciled to heaven, and be meet for it too ; but since it is not so, though they may utter fair words about it, truly it has little of their hearts. (3.) Every corner there is filled with that which of

all things they have the least liking of; and that is holiness, true holiness, perfect holiness. It is true there is joy in heaven, but it is holy joy; there are pleasures in heaven, but they are holy pleasures; there are places to stand by in heaven, but it is holy ground. That holiness that casts up in every place, and in every thing there, would mar all to the unregenerate. (4.) Were they carried thither, they would not only change their place, but they would change their company too. Truly they would never like the company there, who care not for communion with God here; nor value the fellowship of his people, at least in the vitals of practical godliness. Many indeed mix themselves with the godly on earth, to procure a name to themselves, and to cover the naughtiness of their hearts; but that could not be managed there. (5.) They would never like the employment of heaven, they care so little for it now. The business of the saints there would be an intolerable burden to them, seeing it is not agreeable to their nature. To be taken up in beholding, admiring, and praising Him that sitteth on the throne, and of the Lamb, would be work unsuitable, and therefore unsavoury to an unrenewed soul. Lastly, They would find this fault with it, that the whole is of everlasting continuance. This would be a killing ingredient in it to them. How would such as now account the Sabbath-day a burden, brook the celebrating of an everlasting Sabbath in the heavens!

Lastly, Regeneration is absolutely necessary to your being admitted into heaven. No heaven without it. Though carnal men could digest all these things which make heaven so unsuitable for them,

yet God will never suffer them to come thither: therefore, born again you must be, else ye shall never see heaven, ye shall perish eternally. For, (1.) There is a bill of exclusion against you in the court of heaven: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Here is a bar before you, that men and angels cannot remove. And to hope for heaven against this peremptory sentence, is to hope that God will recall his word, and sacrifice his truth and faithfulness to your safety. (2.) There is no holiness without regeneration; it is "the new man which is created in true holiness:" and no heaven without holiness; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." God will not admit such into the holy place of communion with him here; and will he admit them into the holiest of all hereafter? will he take the children of the devil, and give them to sit with him in his throne? or will he bring the unclean into the city, whose street is pure gold? Be not deceived: grace and glory are but two links of one chain, which God has joined, and no man shall put asunder. None are transplanted into the paradise above, but out of the nursery of grace below. If ye be unholy while in this world, ye will be for ever miserable in the world to come. (3.) All the unregenerate are without Christ, and therefore "having no hope while in that case." Will Christ prepare mansions of glory for them that refuse to receive him into their hearts? Nay, rather, will he not "laugh at their calamity, who now set at nought all his counsel?" Lastly, There is an infallible connection betwixt a finally unregenerate state and damnation, arising from the nature of the things themselves, and

from the decree of heaven, which is fixed and unmoveable: "To be carnally minded is death." Depraved nature makes men meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the damned, in utter darkness.

(1.) Ye are hardened against reproof; though ye are told your danger, yet ye will not see it, ye will not believe it. But remember, that the conscience being now seared with a hot iron is a sad presage of everlasting burnings. (2.) Your unfruitfulness under the

means of grace fits you for the axe of God's judgments: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire." The

withered branch is fuel for the fire. Tremble at this, ye despisers of the gospel; if ye be not thereby made meet for heaven, ye will be like the barren ground, bearing briers and thorns, "nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." (3.) The hellish

dispositions of mind, which discover themselves in profanity of life, fit the guilty for the regions of horror. A profane life will have a miserable end:

"They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Think on this, ye prayerless persons, ye mockers of religion, ye cursers and swearers, ye unclean and unjust persons, who have not so much as moral honesty to keep you from lying, cheating, and stealing. What sort of a tree think ye it to be,

upon which these fruits grow? Is it a tree of righteousness, which the Lord hath planted? or is it not such a one as cumbers the ground, which God will pluck up for fuel to the fire of his wrath? (4.)

Your being "dead in sin," makes you meet to be buried in the bottomless pit, as in a grave. Great was the cry in Egypt, when the first-born in each

family was dead; but are there not many families, where all are dead together? nay, many there are “who are twice dead, plucked up by the roots.” Some-time in their life they have been roused by apprehensions of death and its consequences; but now they are so far on in their way to the land of darkness, that they hardly ever have the least glimmering of light from heaven. (5) The darkness of your minds presageth eternal darkness. O the horrid ignorance some are plagued with; while others, who have got some rays of reason’s light into their heads, are utterly void of spiritual light in their hearts! If ye knew your case, ye would cry out, ‘Oh! darkness! darkness! darkness making way for the blackness of darkness for ever!’ The face-covering is upon you already, as condemned persons; so near are ye to everlasting darkness. It is only Jesus Christ who can stop the execution, and put a pardon in your hand: “And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people;” that is, the face-covering cast over the condemned, as in Haman’s case: “As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.” Lastly, The chains of darkness ye are bound with, in the prison of your depraved state, fit you to be cast into “the burning fiery furnace.” Ah, miserable men! Sometimes their consciences stir within them, and they begin to think of amending their ways. But, alas! they are in chains, they cannot do it. They are chained by the heart: their lusts cleave so fast to them, that they cannot, nay, they will not shake them off. Thus you see what affinity there is betwixt an unregenerate state, and the state of the damned, the

state of absolute and irretrievable misery. Be convinced then, that ye must be born again; put a high value on the new birth, and eagerly desire it.

The text tells you, that the word is the seed whereof the new creature is formed: therefore take heed to it, and entertain it, for it is your life. Apply yourselves to the reading of the Scripture. Ye that cannot read, cause others read it to you. Wait diligently on the preaching of the word, as, by divine appointment, the special mean of conversion; for "it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." Wherefore cast not yourselves out of Christ's way; reject not the means of grace, lest ye be found to "judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life." Attend carefully to the word preached. Hear every sermon as if you were hearing for eternity; and take heed the fowls of the air pick not up this seed from you as it is sown. "Give thyself wholly to it." Receive it not "as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God." And hear it with application, looking on it as a message sent from heaven, to you in particular, though not to you only: "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Lay it up in your hearts, meditate upon it; and, by earnest prayer, beg the dew of heaven may fall on thy heart, that the seed may spring up there.

More particularly, (1.) Receive the testimony of the word of God concerning the misery of an unregenerate state, the sinfulness thereof, and the absolute necessity of regeneration. (2.) Receive its testimony concerning God, what a holy and just One

he is. (3.) Examine thy ways by it ; namely, the thoughts of thy heart, the expressions of thy lips, and the tenor of thy life. Look back through the several periods of thy life, and see thy sins from the precepts of the word, and learn from its threatenings what thou art liable to on the account of these sins. (4.) View the corruption of thy nature, by the help of the same word of God. Were these things deeply rooted in the heart, they might be the seed of that fear and sorrow, on account of thy soul's state, which are necessary to prepare and stir thee up to look after a Saviour. Fix your thoughts upon him offered to thee in the gospel, as fully suited to thy case ; having, by his obedience to the death, perfectly satisfied the justice of God, and brought in everlasting righteousness. This may prove the seed of humiliation, desire, hope, and faith ; and put thee on to stretch out the withered hand unto him, at his own command.

Let these things sink deeply into your hearts, and improve them diligently. Remember, whatever ye be, ye *must* be born again ; else it had been better for you ye had never been born. Wherefore, if any of you shall live and die in an unregenerate state, ye will be inexcusable, having been fairly warned of your hazard.

HEAD II.

THE MYSTICAL UNION BETWIXT CHRIST AND
BELIEVERS.

JOHN xv. 5.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches.”

HAVING spoken of the change made by regeneration on all those that shall inherit eternal life, in opposition to their natural real state, the state of degeneracy; I proceed to speak of the change made upon them in their union with the Lord Jesus Christ, in opposition to their natural relative state, the state of misery. The doctrine of the saint's union with Christ is very plainly and fully insisted on, from the beginning to the 12th verse of this chapter; which is a part of our Lord's farewell-sermon to his disciples. Sorrow had now filled their hearts: they were apt to say, ‘Alas! what will become of us, when our Master is taken from our head? who will then instruct us? who will solve our doubts? how will we be supported under our difficulties and discouragements? how will we be able to live without our wonted communication with him?’ Wherefore, our Lord Jesus Christ seasonably teaches them the mystery of their union with him, comparing himself to the vine-stock, and them to the branches.

He compares, I say, (1.) Himself to a vine-stock, “I am the vine.” He had been celebrating with his disciples the sacrament of his Supper, that sign

and seal of his people's union with himself; and had told them, "He would drink no more of the fruit of the vine, till he should drink it new with them in his Father's kingdom:" and now he shows himself to be the vine, from whence the wine of their consolation should come. The vine hath less beauty than many other trees, but it is exceedingly fruitful; fitly representing the low condition our Lord was then in, yet bringing many sons to glory. But that which is chiefly aimed at in his comparing himself to a vine is, to represent himself as the supporter and nourisher of his people, in whom they live and bring forth fruit. (2.) He compares them to the branches: ye are the branches of that vine; ye are the branches knit to, and growing on this stock, drawing all your life and sap from it. It is a beautiful comparison: as if he had said, 'I am as a vine, ye are as the branches of that vine.' Now there are two sorts of branches: 1. Natural branches, which at first spring out of the stock; these are the branches that are in the tree, and were never out of it. 2. There are ingrafted branches, which are branches cut off from the tree that first gave them life, and put into another to grow upon it. Thus branches come to be on a tree, which originally were not on it. The branches mentioned in the text are of the latter sort; branches broken off, (as the word in the original language denotes,) namely, from the tree that first gave them life. None of the children of men are natural branches of the second Adam, namely, Jesus Christ the true vine; they are all the natural branches of the first Adam, that degenerate vine: but the elect are all of them sooner or later broken off from the natural stock, and ingrafted into Christ the true vine.

DOCTRINE, *They who are in the state of grace, are ingrafted in, and united to the Lord Jesus Christ.* They are taken out of the natural stock, cut off from it; and are now ingrafted into Christ as the new stock. In handling of this, I shall speak to the mystical union, (1.) More generally; (2.) More particularly.

A General View of the Mystical Union.

FIRST, In the general, for understanding the union betwixt the Lord Jesus Christ, and his elect, who believe in him and on him:—

1. It is a spiritual union. Man and wife, by their marriage-union, become one flesh: Christ and true believers, by this union, become “one spirit.” As one soul or spirit actuates both the head and the members in the natural body; so the one Spirit of God dwells in Christ and the Christian: for, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Corporeal union is made by contact; so the stones in a building are united: but this is a union of another nature. Were it possible we could eat the flesh, and drink the blood of Christ, in a corporeal and carnal manner, it would profit nothing. It was not Mary’s bearing him in her womb, but her believing on him, that made her a saint: “A certain woman—said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.”

2. It is a real union. Such is our weakness in our present state, so much are we immersed in sin, that we are prone to form, in our fancy, an image of

every thing proposed to us: and as to whatever is denied us, we are apt to suspect it to be but a fiction, or what has no reality. But nothing is more real than what is spiritual: as approaching nearest to the nature of him who is the fountain of all reality, namely, God himself. We do not see with our eyes the union betwixt our own soul and body; neither can we represent it to ourselves truly, by imagination, as we do sensible things: yet the reality of it is not to be doubted. Faith is no fancy, but “the substance of things hoped for.” Neither is the union thereby made betwixt Christ and believers imaginary, but most real: “for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”

3. It is a most close and intimate union. Believers, regenerate persons who fiducially credit him, and rely on him, have “put on Christ.” If that be not enough, he is *in them, formed in them*. He is *the foundation*; they are *the lively stones* built upon him. He is *the head*, and they *the body*. Nay, he *liveth in them*, as their very souls in their bodies. And, what is more than all this, they are one in the Father and the Son, as the Father is in Christ and Christ in the Father: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”

4. Though it is not a mere legal union, yet it is a union sustained in law. Christ as the cautioner, the Christian as the principal debtor, are one in the eye of the law. When the elect had run themselves, with the rest of mankind, in debt to the justice of God, Christ became surety for them, and paid the debt. When they believe on him, they are united

to him in a spiritual marriage-union; which takes effect so far, that what he did and suffered for them is reckoned in law as if they had done and suffered it themselves. Hence they are said to be “crucified with Christ,” “buried with him,” yea, “raised up together, (namely, with Christ,) and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

5. It is an indissoluble union. Once in Christ, ever in him. Having taken up his habitation in the heart, he never removes. Who will dissolve this union? will he himself do it? No, we have his word for it: “I will not turn away from them.” But perhaps the sinner will do this mischief to himself? No, he shall not: “They shall not depart from me, saith their God.” Can devils do it? No, unless they be stronger than Christ, and his Father too: “Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.—And none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” But what say you of death, which separates the soul from the body? will not death do it? No; the apostle (Rom. viii.) is persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor devils, those evil angels, nor the devil’s persecuting agents, though they be principalities or powers on earth; nor evil things present, already lying on us; nor evil things to come on us; nor the height of worldly felicity, nor depth of worldly misery, nor any other creature, good or ill, “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” As death separated Christ’s soul from his body, but could not separate either his soul or body from his divine nature; so, though the saints should be separated from their nearest relations, yea, though their souls should be

separated from their bodies, yet soul and body shall remain united to the Lord Christ; for even in death “they sleep in Jesus,” and “he keepeth all their bones.” Union with Christ is the grace wherein we stand firm and stable, as mount Zion, which cannot be removed.

Lastly, It is a mysterious union. The gospel is a doctrine of mysteries. It discovers to us the substantial union of the three persons in one Godhead, “these three are one:” the hypostatical union of the divine and human natures in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, “God was manifest in the flesh;” and the mystical union betwixt Christ and believers—this is a great mystery also. O what mysteries are here! the head in heaven, the members on earth, yet really united! Christ in the believer, living in him, walking in him! and the believer dwelling in God, putting on the Lord Jesus, eating his flesh, and drinking his blood! This makes the saints a mystery to the world, yea, a mystery to themselves.

SECONDLY, I come now more particularly to speak of this union with, and ingrafting into Jesus Christ. And, (1.) I shall consider the natural stock, out of which the branches are taken. (2.) The supernatural stock, into which they are ingrafted. (3.) What branches are cut off the old stock, and put into the new. (4.) How it is done. And, Lastly, The benefits flowing from this union and ingrafting.

Of the Natural and Supernatural Stocks, and the Branches taken out of the former and ingrafted into the latter.

I. LET us take a view of the stock out of which the branches are taken. The two Adams, that is, Adam and Christ, are the two stocks; for the Scripture speaks of these two as if there had never been more men in the world than they: “The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” “The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.” And the reason is, there never were any that were not branches of one of these two—all men being either in the one stock or in the other; for in these two sorts all mankind stands divided: “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” The first Adam, then, is the natural stock: on this stock are the branches found growing at first, which are afterwards cut off, and ingrafted into Christ.

There are four things to be remembered here: (1.) That all mankind (the man Christ excepted) are naturally branches of the first Adam: “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.” (2.) The bond which knit us into the natural stock was the covenant of works. Adam, being our natural root, was made the moral root also; bearing all his posterity, as representing them in the covenant of works: for “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” It behooved them to arise from a moral bond betwixt Adam and us; the bond of a covenant, which could

be no other than the covenant of works, wherein we were united to him as branches to a stock. Hence Jesus Christ, though a son of Adam, was none of these branches : for, seeing he came not of Adam in virtue of the blessing of marriage, which was given before the fall, “ Be fruitful and multiply,” but in virtue of a special promise made after the fall, “ The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head,” Adam could not represent him in a covenant made before his fall. (3.) As it is impossible for a branch to be in two stocks at once, so no man can be, at one and the same time, both in the first and second Adam. (4.) Hence it evidently follows, that all who are not ingrafted into Jesus Christ, are yet branches of the old stock, and so partake of the nature of the same. Now, as to the first Adam, our natural stock, consider,

First, What a stock he was originally. He was a vine of the Lord’s planting, a choice vine, a noble vine, wholly a right seed. There was a consultation of the Trinity at the planting of this vine: “ Let us make man in our image, after our own likeness.” There was sap enough in it to have nourished all the branches to bring forth fruit unto God. My meaning is, Adam was made able perfectly to keep the commandments of God, which would have procured eternal life to himself and to all his posterity: for, seeing all die by Adam’s disobedience, all should have had life by his obedience, if he had stood. Consider,

Secondly, What that stock now is: Ah! most unlike to what it was when planted by the Author and Fountain of all good.

1. It is a degenerate naughty stock. Therefore the Lord God said to Adam in that dismal day, ‘“Where art thou?” in what condition art thou now? how art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?’ Or, ‘Where wast thou? why not in the place of meeting with me? why so long a coming? what meaneth this fearful change, this hiding of thyself from me?’ Alas! the stock is degenerate, quite spoiled, and brings forth wild grapes. Converse with the devil is preferred to communion with God; Satan is believed, and God, who is truth itself, disbelieved. He who was the friend of God is now in conspiracy against him. Darkness is come into the room of light; ignorance prevails in the mind, where divine knowledge shone; the will, some time righteous or regular, is now turned rebel against its Lord; and the whole man is in dreadful disorder.

Before I go further, let me stop and observe, here is a mirror both for saints and sinners. Sinners, stand here, and consider what you are; and saints, learn ye what once ye were. Ye sinners are branches of a degenerate stock. Fruit you may bear indeed; but now that your vine is the vine of Sodom, your grapes must of course be “grapes of gall.” The Scripture speaks of two sorts of fruit, which grow on the branches upon the natural stock; and it is plain enough they are of the nature of their degenerate stock. (1.) The wild grapes of wickedness: these grow in abundance, by influence from hell. (See Gal. v. 19—21.) Storms come from heaven to put them back; but they still grow. They are struck at with the sword of the Spirit, the word of God; conscience gives them many a secret blow; yet they thrive. (2.)

Fruit to themselves. What else are all the unrenewed man's acts of obedience, his reformation, sober deportment, his prayers and good works? They are all done chiefly for himself, not for the glory of God. These fruits are like the apples of Sodom; fair to look at, but fall to ashes when handled and tried. Ye think ye have not only the leaves of a profession, but the fruits of a holy practice too; but if ye be not broken off from the old stock, and ingrafted into Christ Jesus, God accepts not nor regards your fruits.

Here I must take occasion to tell you, there are five faults will be found in heaven with your best fruits. (1.) Their bitterness: your "clusters are bitter." There is a spirit of bitterness, wherewith some come before the Lord in religious duties, living in malice and envy; and which some professors entertain against others, because they outshine them by holiness of life, or because they are not of their opinion. This, wheresoever it reigns, is a fearful symptom of an unregenerate state. But I do not so much mean this, as that which is common to all the branches of the old stock; namely, "the leaven of hypocrisy;" which sours and imbitters every duty they perform. The wisdom that is full of good fruits, is "without hypocrisy." (2.) Their ill savour. Their works are abominable, for themselves are corrupt. They all savour of the old stock, not of the new. It is the peculiar privilege of the saints, that they are "unto God a sweet savour of Christ." The unregenerate man's fruit savours not of love to Christ, nor of the blood of Christ, nor of the incense of his intercession; and therefore will never be ac-

cepted of in heaven. (3.) Their unripeness: their grape is "an unripe grape." There is no influence on them from the Sun of Righteousness, to bring them to perfection. They have the shape of fruit, but no more. The matter of duty is in them; but they want right principles and ends: their works are not wrought in God. Their prayers drop from their lips, before their hearts be impregnated with the vital spirit of supplication: their tears fall from their eyes, ere their hearts be truly softened: their feet turn to new paths, and their way is altered, while yet their nature is not changed. (4.) Their lightness: being weighed in the balances they are "found wanting." For evidence whereof, you may observe they do not humble the soul, but lift it up in pride. The good fruits of holiness bear down the branches they grow upon, making them to salute the ground: "I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." But the blasted fruits of unrenov'd men's performances hang lightly on branches towering up to heaven: "Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest." They look indeed so high, that God cannot behold them: "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?" The more duties they do, and the better they seem to perform them, the less are they humbled, and the more are they lifted up. This disposition of the sinner is the exact reverse of what is to be found in the saint. Lastly, They "are not all manner of pleasant fruits." Christ, as a King, must be served with variety. Where God makes the heart his garden, he plants it, as Solomon did his,

with trees of all kinds of fruits. And, accordingly, it brings forth “the fruit of the Spirit in all goodness.” But the ungodly are not so: their obedience is never universal; there is always some one thing or other excepted. In one word, their fruits are fruits of an ill tree, that cannot be accepted in heaven.

2. Our natural stock is a dead stock, according to the threatening, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Our root now is rottenness, no marvel the blossom go up as dust. The stroke has gone to the heart, the sap is let out, and the tree is withered. The curse of the first covenant, like a hot thunder-bolt from heaven, has lighted on it, and ruined it. It is cursed now as the fig-tree, Matt. xxi. 19. “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever.” Now it is good for nothing, but to cumber the ground, and furnish fuel for Tophet.

Let me enlarge a little here also. Every unrenewed man is a branch of a dead stock. When thou seest, O sinner, a dead stock of a tree, exhausted of all its sap, having branches on it in the same condition, look on it as a lively representation of thy soul’s state. (1.) Where the stock is dead, the branches must needs be barren. Alas! the barrenness of many professors plainly discovers on what stock they are growing. It is easy to pretend to faith; but “show me thy faith without thy works,” if thou canst. (2.) A dead stock can convey no sap to the branches, to make them to bring forth fruit. The covenant of works was the bond of our union with the natural stock; but now it is become weak through the flesh; that is, through the degeneracy and de-

pravity of human nature. The law, like a merciless creditor, apprehends Adam's heirs, saying, 'Pay what thou owest;' when, alas! his effects are riotously spent. (3.) All pains and cost are lost on the tree whose life is gone. In vain do men labour to get fruit on the branches, when there is no sap in the root. First, The gardener's pains are lost; ministers lose their labour on the branches of the old stock, while they continue on it. Sleeping men may be awakened, but the dead cannot be raised without a miracle: even so the dead sinner must remain so, if he be not restored to life by a miracle of grace. Secondly, The influences of heaven are lost on such a tree; in vain doth the rain fall upon it. The Lord of the vineyard digs about many a dead soul, but it is not bettered. "Bruise the fool in a mortar, his folly will not depart." Though he meets with many crosses, yet he retains his lusts; let him be laid on a sick-bed, he will lie there like a sick beast, groaning under his pain; but not mourning for, not turning from his sin. Let death itself stare him in the face, he will presumptuously maintain his hope, as if he would look the grim messenger out of countenance. Sometimes there are common operations of the divine Spirit performed on him: he is sent home with a trembling heart, and with arrows of conviction sticking in his soul; but at length he prevails against these things, and turns as secure as ever. Thirdly, Summer and winter are alike to the branches on the dead stock. When others about them are budding, blossoming, and bringing forth fruit, there is no change on them; the dead stock has no growing time at all. Perhaps it may be dif-

ficult to know, in the winter, what trees are dead, and what are alive ; but the spring plainly discovers it. There are some seasons, wherein there is little life to be perceived, even amongst saints ; yet times of reviving come at length. But even when the vine flourisheth, and the pomegranates bud forth, (when saving grace is discovering itself by its lively actings, wheresoever it is,) the branches on the old stock are still withered. They are trees that cumber the ground, are near to be cut down ; and will be cut down for the fire, if God in mercy prevent it not, by cutting them off from that stock, and ingrafting them into another.

Lastly, Our natural stock is a killing stock. If the stock die, how can the branches live ? If the sap be gone from the root and heart, the branches must needs wither. “ In Adam all die.” The root died in paradise, and all the branches with it. The root is impoisoned, thence the branches come to be infected.

Know, then, that every natural man is a branch of a killing stock. Our natural root not only gives us not life, but it has a killing power, reaching all the branches thereof. There are four things which the first Adam conveys to all his branches ; and they are abiding in, and lying on, such of them as are not ingrafted in Christ. First, A corrupt nature. He sinned, and his nature was thereby corrupted or depraved ; and this corruption is conveyed to all his posterity. Secondly, Guilt, that is, an obligation to punishment : “ By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin : and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Thirdly, This

killing stock transmits the curse into the branches. The stock as the stock (for I speak not of Adam in his personal and private capacity) being cursed, so are the branches: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." This curse affects the whole man, and all that belongs to him, every thing he possesses; and worketh three ways, (1.) As poison infecting: thus their "blessings are cursed." Whatever the man enjoys, it can do him no good, but evil, being thus poisoned by the curse. His prosperity in the world destroys him. The ministry of the gospel is "a savour of death unto death" to him. His seeming attainments in religion are cursed to him: his knowledge serves but to puff him up, and his duties to keep him back from Christ. (2.) It worketh as a moth, consuming and wasting by little and little: "Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth." There is a worm at the root, consuming them by degrees. (3.) It acteth as a lion rampant: "I will be unto Ephraim as a lion." The Lord "rains on them snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest," in such a manner, that they are hurried away with the stream. He teareth their enjoyments from them in his wrath, pursueth them with terrors, rends their souls from their bodies, and throws the deadened branch into the fire. Thus the curse devours like fire, which none can quench. Lastly, This killing stock transmits death to the branches upon it. Adam took the poisonous cup, and drank it off; this occasioned death to himself and us. We came into the world spiritually dead, thereby obnoxious to eternal death, and absolutely liable to temporal death.

Now, is it not absolutely necessary to be broken

off from this our natural stock? what will our fair leaves of a profession, or our fruits of duties avail, if we be still branches of the degenerate, dead, and killing stock? But, alas! among the many questions tossed among us, few are taken up about these, Whither am I broken off from the old stock, or not? whether am I ingrafted into Christ, or not? Ah! wherefore all this waste? why is there so much noise about religion amongst many, who can give no good account of their having laid a good foundation, being mere strangers to experimental religion? I fear, if God do not, in mercy, timeously undermine the religion of many of us, and let us see we have none at all; our root will be found rottenness, and our blossom go up as dust, in a dying hour. Therefore let us look to our state, that we be not found fools in our latter end.

II. Let us now view the supernatural stock, in which the branches, cut off from the natural stock, are ingrafted. Jesus Christ is sometimes called "the Branch." So he is, in respect of his human nature; being a branch, and the top branch of the house of David. Sometimes he is called "a root," or both together, "I am the root, and the offspring of David." David's root, as God, and his offspring, as man. The text tells, that he is the vine, that is, he, as a Mediator, is the vine stock, whereof believers are the branches. As the sap comes from the earth into the root and stock, and from thence is diffused into the branches; so by Christ, as Mediator, divine life is conveyed from the fountain, unto those who are united to him by faith, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father;

so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Now Christ is Mediator as God-man: "The church of God, which he hath purchased with his blood." "Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." The divine and human natures have their distinct actings, yet a joint operation, in his discharging the office of Mediator. Wherefore Christ, God-man, is the stock, whereof believers are the branches; and they are united to whole Christ. They are united to him in his human nature, as being "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and they are united to him in his divine nature; for so the apostle speaks of this union: "Christ in you the hope of glory." And by him they are united to the Father, and to the Holy Ghost: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Faith, the bond of this union, receives whole Christ, God-man; and so unites us to him as such.

Behold here, O believers, your high privilege. Ye were once branches of a degenerate stock, even as others; but ye are, by grace, become branches of "the true vine." Ye are cut out of a dead stock; and ingrafted in "the last Adam, who was made a quickening spirit." Your loss by the first Adam is made up with great advantage, by your union with the second. Adam was but a servant; Christ is the Son, the heir, and Lord of all things, the Lord from heaven. It cannot be denied, that grace was shown in the first covenant; but it is as far exceeded by the grace of the second covenant, as the twilight is by the light of the mid-day.

III. What branches are taken out of the natural stock, and grafted into this vine? *Ans.* These are the elect, and none other. They, and they only, are grafted into Christ; and consequently none but they are cut off from the killing stock. For them alone he intercedes, that they may be one in him, and his Father. Faith, the bond of this union, is given to none else; it is “the faith of God’s elect.” The Lord passed by many branches growing on the natural stock; and cuts off only here one, and there one, and grafts them into the true vine, according as free love hath determined. Oft does he pitch upon the most unlikely branch, leaving the top boughs; passing by the mighty, and the noble, and calling the weak, base, and despised. If we inquire, why so; we find no other reason but because they were chosen in him: “Predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.” Thus are they gathered together in Christ; while the rest are left growing on their natural stock, to be afterwards bound up in bundles for the fire. Wherefore, to whomsoever the gospel may come in vain, it will have a blessed effect on God’s elect: “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Where the Lord has much people, the gospel will have much success sooner or later. Such as are to be saved, will be added to the mystical body of Christ.

How the Branches are taken out of the natural stock, and ingrafted into the supernatural stock.

IV. I am to show how the branches are cut off from the natural stock, the first Adam, and grafted into the true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks

to the husbandman, not to the branch, that it is cut off from its natural stock, and grafted into a new one. The sinner, in his coming off from the first stock, is passive; and neither can nor will come off from it of his own accord; but clings to it, till almighty power make him to fall off: “No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.” “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” The ingrafted branches are “God’s husbandry,—the planting of the Lord.” The ordinary means he makes use of in this work is the ministry of the word: “We are labourers together with God.” But the efficacy thereof is wholly from him, whatever the minister’s parts or piety be: “Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.” The apostles preached to the Jews, yet the body of that people remained in infidelity: “Who hath believed our report?” Yea, Christ himself, who spoke as never man spoke, saith, concerning the success of his own ministry, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought.” However, God’s ordinary way is, “by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

The cutting off the branch from the natural stock, is performed by the pruning-knife of the law, in the hand of the Spirit of God: “For I, through the law, am dead to the law.” It is by the bond of the covenant of works that we are knit to our natural stock; and therefore, as a wife, unwilling to be put away, pleads and hangs by the marriage tie; so do men by the covenant of works. This will appear from a distinct view of the Lord’s work on men, in

bringing them off from the old stock; which now I offer in the following particulars:

1. When the Spirit of the Lord comes to deal with a person, to bring him to Christ, he finds him in Laodicea's case, in a sound sleep of security, dreaming of heaven, and the favour of God, though full of sin against the holy One of Israel: "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:" and therefore he darts in some beams of light into the dark soul; and lets the man see he is a lost man, if he betake not himself to a new course of life. Thus, by the Spirit of the Lord, acting as a spirit of bondage, there is a criminal court erected in the man's breast, where he is arraigned, accused, and condemned for breaking the law of God, "convinced of sin and judgment." And now he can no longer sleep securely in his former course of life. This is the first stroke the branch gets, in order to cutting off.

2. Hereupon the man forsakes his former profane courses, his lying, swearing, sabbath-breaking, stealing, and such like practices; though they be dear to him as right eyes, he will rather quit them than ruin his soul. Now he begins to bless himself in his heart, and look joyfully on his evidences for heaven, thinking himself a better servant to God than many others: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," &c. But he soon gets another stroke with the axe of the law, showing him that it is only he that doth what is written in the law who can be saved by it; and that his negative holiness is too scanty a cover from the storm of God's wrath. And thus, although

his sins of commission only were heavy on him before, his sins of omission now crowd into his thoughts, attended with a train of law curses and vengeance.

3. Upon this he turns to a positively holy course of life. He not only is not profane, but he performs religious duties: he prays, seeks the knowledge of the principles of religion, strictly observes the Lord's day, and, like Herod, does many things, and hears sermon gladly. In one word, there is a great conformity in his outward conversation to the letter of both tables of the law. And now there is a mighty change upon the man, so that his neighbours cannot miss to take notice of it. Hence he is cheerfully admitted by the godly into their society, as a praying person, and can confer with them about religious matters, yea, and about soul exercise, which some are not acquainted with. And their good opinion of him confirms his good opinion of himself. This step in religion is fatal to many, who never get beyond it. But here the Lord reacheth the elect-branch a farther stroke. Conscience flies in the man's face for some wrong steps in his conversation; the neglect of some duty, or commission of some sin, which is a blot in his conversation: and then the flaming sword of the law appears again over his head, for that "he continueth not in all things written in the law to do them."

4. On this account he is obliged to seek another salve for his sore. He goes to God, confesseth his sin, seeks the pardon of it, promising to watch against it for the time to come; and so finds ease, and thinks he may very well take it, seeing the Scripture saith, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to

forgive us our sins ;” not considering that he grasps at a privilege which is theirs only who are grafted into Christ, and under the covenant of grace, and which the branches yet growing on the old stock cannot plead. And here sometimes there are formal and express vows made against such and such sins, and binding to such and such duties. Thus many go on all their days : knowing no other religion but to do duties, and to confess and pray for pardon of that wherein they fail, promising themselves eternal happiness, though they are utter strangers to Christ. Here many elect ones have been cast down wounded, and many reprobates have been slain ; while the wounds of neither of them have been deep enough to cut them off from their natural stock. But the Spirit of the Lord gives yet a deeper stroke to the branch which is to be cut off : showing him that as yet he is but an outside saint, and discovering to him the sin lodged in his heart, which he took no notice of before : “ When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” Now, as soon as the door of the chamber of his imagery is thus opened to him, and he sees what they do there in the dark, his outside religion is blown up as insufficient ; and he learns a new lesson in religion, namely, “ That he is not a Jew which is one outwardly.”

5. Upon this he goes further, even to inside religion : sets to work more vigorously than ever, mourns over the evils of his heart, and strives to bear down the weeds he finds growing in that neglected garden. He labours to curb his pride and passion, and to banish speculative impurities ; prays more fervently, hears attentively, and strives to get his heart affected

in every religious duty he performs: and thus he comes to think himself, not only an outside, but an inside Christian. Wonder not at this: for there is nothing in it beyond the power of nature, or what one may attain to under a vigorous influence of the covenant of works. Therefore, another yet deeper stroke is reached. The law chargeth home on the man's conscience that he was a transgressor from the womb; that he has been guilty of many actual sins; either altogether overlooked by him, or not sufficiently mourned over. And therefore the law takes him by the throat, saying, 'Pay what thou owest.'

6. Then the sinner says in his heart, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all;' and so falls to work to pacify an offended God, and to atone for these sins. He renews his repentance, such as it is; bears patiently the afflictions laid upon him; yea, he afflicts himself, denies himself the use of his lawful comforts, sighs deeply, mourns bitterly, cries with tears for pardon, till he hath wrought up his heart to a conceit of having obtained it: having thus done penance for what is past, and resolving to be a good servant to God, and to hold on in outward and inward obedience for the time to come. But the stroke must go nearer the heart yet, ere the branch fall off. The Lord discovers to him, in the glass of the law, how he sinneth in all he does, even when he does the best he can; and therefore the dreadful sound returns to his ears, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things," &c. "When ye fasted and mourned, saith the Lord, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?" Will you satisfy for one sin with another? Did not your thoughts wander in such a

duty? were not your affections flat in another? did not your heart give a whorish look to such an idol? and did it not rise in a fit of impatience under such an affliction? “Should I accept this of your hand?—Cursed be the deceiver—which sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing.” And thus he becomes so far broken off, that he sees he is not able to satisfy the demands of the law.

7. Hence, like a broken man, who finds he is not able to pay all his debt, he goes about to compound with his creditor: and, being in pursuit of ease and comfort, he does what he can to fulfil the law; and wherein he fails he looks that God will accept the will for the deed. Thus doing his duty, and having a will to do better, he cheats himself into a persuasion of the goodness of his state: and hereby thousands are ruined. But the elect get another stroke, which looseth their hold in this case. The doctrine of the law is borne in on their consciences, demonstrating to them that exact and perfect obedience is required by it, under pain of the curse; and that it is doing, and not wishing to do, which will avail. Wishing to do better will not answer the law’s demands; and therefore the curse sounds again, “Cursed is every one that continueth not—to *do* them;” that is, actually to do them. In vain is wishing then.

8. Being broken off from hopes of compounding with the law, he falls a borrowing. He sees that all he can do to obey the law, and all he desires to be and to do better, will not save his soul; therefore he goes to Christ, entreating that his righteousness may make up what is wanting in his own, and cover all the defects of his doings and sufferings; that so God,

for Christ's sake, may accept them, and thereupon be reconciled. Thus, doing what he can to fulfil the law, and looking to Christ to make up all his defects, he comes at length again to sleep. Many persons are ruined this way. This was the error of the Galatians, which Paul, in his epistle to them, disputes against. But the Spirit of God breaks off the sinner from this hold also; by bearing in on his conscience that great truth, "The law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." There is no mixing of the law and faith in this business; the sinner must hold by one of them, and let the other go. The way of the law and the way of faith are so far different, that it is not possible for a sinner to walk in the one but he must come off from the other: and if he be for doing, he must do all alone; Christ will not do a part for him, if he do not all. Thus the man, who was in a dream, and thought he was eating, is awakened by the stroke, and, behold his soul is faint: his heart sinks in him, while he finds he can neither bear his burden himself alone, nor can he get help under it.

9. What can one do, who must needs pay, and yet neither has as much of his own as will bring him out of debt, nor can he get as much to borrow? What can such a one do, I say, but sell himself, as the man under the law that was "waxen poor?" Therefore the sinner, beat off from so many holds, goes about to make a bargain with Christ, and to sell himself to the Son of God, (if I may so speak); solemnly promising and vowing that he will be a servant to Christ as long as he lives, if he will save his soul. And here oftentimes the sinner makes a per-

sonal covenant with Christ, resigning himself to him on these terms; yea, and takes the sacrament to make the bargain sure. Hereupon the man's great care is, how to obey Christ, keep his commands, and so fulfil his bargain. And in this the soul finds a false unsound peace for a while, till the Spirit of the Lord fetch another stroke to cut off the man from this refuge of lies likewise. And that happens in this manner: when he fails of the duties he engaged to, and falls again into the sin he covenanted against, it is powerfully carried home on his conscience that his covenant is broken; so all his comfort goes, and terrors afresh seize on his soul, as one that has broken covenant with Christ. And commonly the man, to help himself, renews his covenant, but breaks it again as before. And how is it possible it should be otherwise, seeing he is still upon the old stock? Thus the work of many all their days, as to their souls, is nothing but a making and breaking such covenants over and over again.

Object. Some perhaps will say, 'Who liveth and sinneth not? who is there that faileth not of the duties he is engaged to? If you reject this way as unsound, who then can be saved?' *Ans.* True believers will be saved; namely, all who do by faith take hold of God's covenant. But this kind of covenant is men's own covenant, devised of their own heart, not God's covenant, revealed in the gospel of his grace: and the making of it is nothing else but the making of a covenant of works with Christ, confounding the law and the gospel—a covenant he will never subscribe to, though we should sign it with our heart's blood: "For if they which are of the law be heirs,

faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.—Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace: to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.” “And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.” God’s covenant is everlasting, and the mercies of it are “sure mercies.” But that covenant of yours is a tottering covenant, never sure, but broken every day. It is a mere servile covenant, giving Christ service for salvation: but God’s covenant is a filial covenant, in which the sinner takes Christ and his salvation freely offered, and so becomes a son: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God:” and, being become a son, he serves his father, not that the inheritance may become his, but because it is his through Jesus Christ. See Gal. iv. 24. and downward. To enter into that spurious covenant, is to buy from Christ with money; but to take hold of God’s covenant, is to buy of him “without money and without price;” that is to say, to beg of him. In that covenant men work for life; in God’s covenant they come to Christ for life, and work from life. When a person under that covenant fails in his duty, all is gone; the covenant must be made over again: but under God’s covenant, although the man fail in his duty, and for his failure falls under the discipline of the covenant, and lies under the weight of it till such time as he has recourse anew to the blood of Christ for pardon, and renew his repentance, yet all that he trusted to for life and salvation—namely, the righteousness of Christ—still stands entire, and

the covenant remains firm. See Rom. vii. 24, 25. and viii. 1.

Now, though some men spend their lives in making and breaking such covenants of their own—the terror upon the breaking of them wearing weaker and weaker by degrees, till at last it creates them little or no uneasiness—yet the man in whom the good work is carried on, till it be accomplished in cutting him off from the old stock, finds these covenants to be as rotten cords, broke at every touch; and the terror of God being thereupon redoubled on his spirit, and the waters, at every turn, getting in unto his very soul, he is obliged to cease from catching hold on such covenants, and to seek help some other way.

10. Therefore the man comes at length to beg at Christ's door for mercy; but yet he is a proud beggar, standing on his own personal worth. They cannot think of coming to the spiritual market without money in their hand. They are like persons who have once had an estate of their own, but are reduced to extreme poverty, and forced to beg. When they come to beg, they still remember their former character; and, though they have lost their substance, yet they retain much of their former spirit. Thus God gives the unhumiliated sinner many common mercies, and shuts him not up in the pit, according to his deserving: but all this is nothing in his eyes. He must be set down at the children's table, otherwise he reckons himself hardly dealt with, and wronged: for he is not yet brought so low as to think, "God may be justified when he speaketh, (against him,) and clear (from all iniquity) when he

judgeth" him according to his real demerit. He thinks, perhaps, that, even before he was enlightened, he was better than many others; he considers his reformation of life, his repentance, the grief and tears his sin has cost him, his earnest desires after Christ, his prayers and wrestlings for mercy; and useth all these now as bribes for mercy, laying no small weight upon them in his addresses to the throne of grace. But here the Spirit of the Lord shoots his arrows into the man's heart, whereby his confidence in these things is sunk and destroyed; and, instead of thinking himself better than many, he is made to see himself worse than any. The naughtiness of his reformation of life is discovered; his repentance appears to him no better than the repentance of Judas, his tears like Esau's, and his desires after Christ to be selfish, like theirs who sought Christ "because of the loaves." His answer from God seems now to be, 'Away, proud beggar! how shall I put thee among the children?' He seems to look sternly on him for his slighting of Jesus Christ by unbelief, which is a sin he scarce discerned before. But now, at length, he beholds it in its crimson colours; and is pierced to the heart as with a thousand darts, while he sees how he has been going on blindly, sinning against the remedy of sin, and in the whole course of his life trampling on the blood of the Son of God. And now he is, in his own eyes, the miserable object of law-vengeance, yea, and gospel-vengeance too.

11. The man being thus far humbled, will no more plead, he is worthy for whom Christ should do this thing; but, on the contrary, looks on himself as

unworthy of Christ, and unworthy of the favour of God. We may compare him, in this case, to the young man who followed Christ, "having a linen cloth cast about his naked body : on whom, when the young men laid hold, he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." Even so, the man had been following Christ in the thin garment of his own personal worthiness : but by it, even by it, which he so much trusted to, the law catcheth hold of him, to make him prisoner ; and then he is fain to leave it, and flies away naked ; yet not to Christ, but from him. If you now tell him, he is welcome to Christ, if he will come to him, he is apt to say, ' Can such a vile and unworthy wretch as I be welcome to the holy Jesus ? ' He says, " Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." No man needs speak to him of his repentance, for his comfort ; he can quickly espy such faults in it as makes it naught ; nor of his tears, for he is assured they have never come into the Lord's bottle. He disputes himself away from Christ ; and concludes, now that he has been such a slighter of Christ, and is such an unholy and vile creature, he cannot, he will not, he ought not to come to Christ ; and that he must either be in better case, or else he will never believe. And hence, he now makes his strongest efforts to amend what was amiss in his way before : he prays more earnestly than ever, mourns more bitterly, strives against sin in heart and life more vigorously, and watcheth more diligently ; if by any means he may at length be fit to come to Christ. One would think the man is well humbled now : but ah ! devilish pride lurks under the vail of all this seeming humility. Like a

kindly branch of the old stock, he adheres still, and will "not submit to the righteousness of God." He will not come to free grace without money. He is bidden to the marriage of the King's Son, where the Bridegroom himself furnisheth all the guests with wedding garments, stripping them of their own; but he will not come, because he wants a wedding garment: howbeit he is very busy making one ready. This is sad work; and therefore he must have a deeper stroke yet, else he is ruined. The stroke is reached him with the axe of the law, in its irritating power. Thus the law, girding the soul with cords of death, and holding it in with the rigorous commands of obedience, under the pain of the curse; and God, in his holy and wise conduct, withdrawing his restraining grace; corruption is irritated, lusts become violent, and the more they are striven against, the more they rage like a furious horse checked with the bit. Then do corruptions set up their heads, which he never saw in himself before. Here oft-times atheism, blasphemy, and, in one word, horrible things concerning God, terrible thoughts concerning the faith, arise in his breast; so that his heart is a very hell within him. Thus, while he is sweeping the house of his heart, not yet watered with gospel grace, these corruptions which lay quiet before in neglected corners, fly up and down in it like dust. Read Rom. vii. 8, 9, 10, 13. This is a stroke which goes to the heart: and by it his hopes of getting himself more fit to come to Christ are cut off.

Lastly, Now the time is come, when the man, betwixt hope and despair, resolves to go to Christ as he is; and therefore, like a dying man stretching him-

self just before his breath goes out, he rallies the broken forces of his soul, tries to believe, and in some sort lays hold on Jesus Christ. And now the branch hangs on the old stock, by one single tack of a natural faith, produced by the natural vigour of one's own spirit, under a most pressing necessity. "When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God: and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer." "Israel shall cry unto me, my God, we know thee." But the Lord, minding to perfect his work, fetches yet another stroke, whereby the branch falls quite off. The Spirit of God convincingly discovers to the sinner his utter inability to do any thing that is good; and so he dieth. Rom. vii. 9. That voice powerfully strikes through his soul, "How can ye believe?" Thou canst no more believe than thou canst reach up thine hand to heaven, and bring Christ down from thence. And thus at length he sees he can neither help himself by working, nor by believing; and having no more to hang by on the old stock he therefore falls off. And while he is distressed thus, seeing himself like to be swept away with the flood of God's wrath; and yet unable so much as to stretch forth a hand to lay hold of a twig of the tree of life growing on the banks of the river; he is taken up, and ingrafted in the true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ giving him the spirit of faith.

By what has been said upon this head, I design not to distress tender consciences; for though there are but few such at this day, yet God forbid I should offend any of Christ's little ones! But, alas! a deep

sleep is fallen upon this generation; they will not be awakened, let us go as near the quick as we will; and therefore, I fear there is another sort of awakening abiding this sermon-proof generation, which shall make the ears of them that hear it to tingle. However, I would not have this to be looked upon as the sovereign God's stunted method of breaking off sinners from the old stock; but this I assert, as a certain truth, that all who are in Christ have been broken off from all these several confidences; and that they who were never broken off from them, are yet in their natural stock.

Now it is that the branch is ingrafted in Jesus Christ. And as the law, in the hand of the Spirit of God, was the instrument to cut off the branch from the natural stock; so the gospel, in the hand of the same Spirit, is the instrument used for ingrafting it in the supernatural stock. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The gospel is the silver cord let down from heaven, to draw perishing sinners to land. And though the preaching of the law prepares the way of the Lord, yet it is in the word of the gospel that Christ and a sinner meet. Now, as in the natural grafting, the branch being taken up, is put into the stock; and being put into it, takes with it, and so they are united; even so in the spiritual ingrafting, Christ apprehends the sinner, and the sinner being apprehended of Christ, apprehends him; and so they become one.

1. Christ apprehends the sinner by his Spirit,

and draws him to himself. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” The same Spirit which is in the Mediator himself, he communicates to his elect in due time; never to depart from them, but to abide in them, as a principle of life. Thus he takes hold of them by his own Spirit put into them; and so the withered branch gets life. The soul is now in the hands of the Lord of life, and possessed by the Spirit of life; how can it then but live? the man gets a ravishing sight of Christ’s excellency in the glass of the gospel: he sees him a full, suitable, and willing Saviour, and gets a heart to take him, for, and instead of all. The spirit of faith furnisheth him with feet to come to Christ, and hands to receive him. What by nature he could not do, by grace he can; the Holy Spirit working in him the work of faith with power.

2. The sinner thus apprehended, apprehends Christ by faith, and so takes with the blessed stock: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” The soul that before tried many ways of escape, but all in vain, doth now look again, with the eye of faith, which proves the healing look. As Aaron’s rod, laid up in the tabernacle, budded and brought forth buds; so the dead branch, apprehended by the Lord of life, put into, and bound up with the glorious quickening stock, by the Spirit of life, buds forth in actual believing on Jesus Christ, whereby this union is completed. “We having the same spirit of faith—believe.” Thus the stock and the graft are united, Christ and the Christian are married: faith being the soul’s consent to the spiritual marriage-covenant; which, as it is proposed in

the gospel to mankind sinners indefinitely, so it is demonstrated, attested, and brought home to the man in particular, by the Holy Spirit: and so he, being joined to the Lord, is one spirit with him. Hereby a believer lives in and for Christ, and Christ lives in and for the believer: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "Thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee." The bonds then of this blessed union are, the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on the believer's part.

Now, both the souls and bodies of believers are united to Christ. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." The very bodies of believers have this honour put upon them, that they are "the temples of the Holy Ghost;" and the "members of Christ." When they sleep in the dust, they "sleep in Jesus." And it is in virtue of this union they shall be raised up out of the dust again. "He shall quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." In token of this mystical union, the church of believers is called by the name of her head and husband. "For as the body is one, and hath many members,—so also is Christ."

USE. From what is said, we may draw these following inferences:—

1. The preaching of the law is most necessary. Sinners have many shifts to keep them from Christ, many things by which they keep their hold of the natural stock; therefore they have need to be closely pursued, and hunted out of their refuges of lies.

2. Yet it is the gospel that crowns the work; the law makes nothing perfect. The law lays open the

wound, but it is the gospel that heals. The law strips a man, wounds him, and leaves him half dead; the gospel binds up his wounds, pouring in wine and oil, to heal them. By the law we are broken off; but it is by the gospel we are taken up, and implanted in Christ.

3. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." However men may cleave to Christ, "Call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel;" and they may be bound up as branches in him, by the outward ties of sacraments; yet, if the Spirit that dwells in Christ dwell not in them, they are not one with him. There is a great difference betwixt adhesion and ingrafting. The ivy clasps and twists itself about the oak; but it is not one with it, for it grows on its own root: so, to allude to Isa. iv. 1. many professors take hold of Christ, and eat their own bread, and wear their own apparel, only they are called by his name. They stay themselves upon him, but grow upon their own root; they take him to support their hopes, but their delights are elsewhere.

4. The union betwixt Christ and his mystical members is firm and indissoluble. Were it so that the believer only apprehended Christ, but Christ apprehended not him, we could promise little on the stability of such a union; it might quickly be dissolved; but, as the believer apprehends Christ by faith, so Christ apprehends him by his Spirit, and none shall pluck him out of his hand. Did the child only keep hold of the nurse, it might at length weary and let go its hold, and so fall away; but if she have her arms about the child, it is in no hazard

of falling away, even though it be not actually holding by her: so, whatever sinful intermissions may happen in the exercise of faith, yet the union remains sure, by reason of the constant indwelling of the Spirit. Blessed Jesus! "all his saints are in thy hand," Deut. xxxiii. 3.

Lastly, They have an unsure hold of Christ whom he has not apprehended by his Spirit. There are many half marriages here, where the soul apprehends Christ, but is not apprehended of him. Hence many fall away, and never rise again: they let go their hold of Christ; and when that is gone, all is gone. These are the branches in Christ, that bear not fruit, which the husbandman taketh away. *Quest.* How can that be? *Ans.* These branches are set in the stock by a profession, or an unsound hypocritical faith; they are bound up with it, in the external use of the sacraments; but the stock and they are never knit, therefore they cannot bear fruit. And they need not be cut off, nor broken off; they are by the husbandman only taken away, or (as the word primarily signifies) lifted up; and so taken away, because there is nothing to hold them: they are indeed bound up with the stock; but they have never united with it.

Quest. How shall I know if I am apprehended of Christ? *Ans.* You may be satisfied in this inquiry, if you consider and apply these two things:—

First, When Christ apprehends a man by his Spirit, he is so drawn, that he comes away to Christ with his whole heart: for true believing is believing with all the heart. Our Lord's followers are like those who followed Saul at first, "men whose hearts

God had touched." When the Spirit pours in overcoming grace, they pour out their hearts like water before him, Ps. lxii. 8. They flow unto him like a river. "All nations shall flow unto it," namely, to the mountain of the Lord's house. It denotes not only the abundance of converts, but the disposition of their souls in coming to Christ; they come heartily and freely, as drawn with loving-kindness. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;" that is, free, ready, open-hearted, giving themselves to thee as free-will offerings. When the bridegroom has the bride's heart, it is a right marriage; but some give their hand to Christ, who give him not their heart. They that are only driven to Christ by terror, will surely leave him again when that terror is gone. Yet terror may begin the work which love crowns. The strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire going before; the still small voice, in which the Lord is, may come after them. When the blessed Jesus is seeking sinners to match with him, they are bold and perverse, they will not speak with him, till he hath wounded them, made them captives, and bound them with the cords of death. The Lord tells us, Hos. ii. that his chosen Israel shall be married unto himself. But how will the bride's consent be won? Why, in the first place, he will bring her into the wilderness, as he did the people when he brought them out of Egypt. There she shall be hardly dealt with, scorched with thirst, and bitten of serpents: and then he will speak comfortably to her; or, as the expression is, he will speak upon her heart. The sinner is first driven, and then drawn to Christ. The Lord sends the

avenger of blood in pursuit of the criminal; and he, with a sad heart, leaves his own city, and with tears in his eyes parts with his old acquaintances, because he dare not stay with them; and he flees for his life to the city of refuge. This is not at all his choice, it is forced work; necessity has no law. But, when he comes to the gates, and sees the beauty of the place, the excellency and loveliness of it charms him, and then he enters it with heart and good-will, saying, "This is my rest, and here I will stay;" and, as one said in another case, "I had perished, unless I had believed."

Secondly, When Christ apprehends a soul, the heart is disengaged from and turned against sin. As, in cutting off the branch from the old stock, the great idol self is brought down, the man is powerfully taught to deny himself; so, in the apprehending of the sinner by the Spirit, that union is dissolved which was betwixt the man and his lusts, while he was in the flesh, as the Apostle expresses it, Rom. vii. 5. His heart is loosed from them, though formerly as dear to him as the members of his body; and, instead of taking pleasure in them, as some time he did, he longs to be rid of them. And thus the Lord wounds the head and heart of sin, and the soul comes to him, saying "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit."

Of the Benefits flowing to true Believers from their Union with Christ.

V. And lastly, I come to speak of the benefits flowing to true believers from their union with Christ.

The chief of the particular benefits believers have by it, are justification, peace, adoption, sanctification, growth in grace, fruitfulness in good works, acceptance of these good works, establishment in a state of grace, support, and a special conduct of Providence about them. As for communion with Christ, it is such a benefit, as being the immediate consequent of union with him, comprehends all the rest as mediate ones. For as the branch, immediately upon its union with the stock, hath communion with the stock, in all that is in it; so the believer, uniting with Christ, hath communion with him: in which he launcheth forth into an ocean of happiness, is led into a paradise of pleasures, and has a saving interest in the treasure hid in the field of the gospel, the unsearchable riches of Christ. As soon as the believer is united to Christ, Christ himself, in whom all fullness dwells, is his: "My beloved is mine, and I am his." And "how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours." Thus communion with Christ is the great comprehensive blessing, necessarily flowing from our union with him. Let us now consider the particular benefits flowing from it, before mentioned.

The *first* particular benefit that a sinner hath by his union with Christ is *justification*; for being united to Christ, he hath communion with him in his righteousness. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness." He stands no more condemned, but justified before God, as being in Christ, "There

is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The branches hereof are pardon of sin, and personal acceptance.

First, His sins are pardoned, the guilt of them is removed. The bond, obliging him to pay his debt, is cancelled. The sinner, out of Christ, is bound over to the wrath of God: he is under an obligation in law to go to the prison of hell, and there to lie till he has paid the utmost farthing. This ariseth from the terrible sanction with which the law is fenced, which is no less than death. So that the sinner, passing the bounds assigned him, is as Shimei, in another case, a man of death. But now, being united to Christ, God saith, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." The sentence of condemnation is reversed, the believer is absolved, and set beyond the reach of the condemning law. His sins, which sometimes were set before the Lord, so that they could not be hid, God now takes and "casts them all behind his back;" yea, he "casts them into the depths of the sea." They are not only forgiven, but forgotten: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more." And though their after sins do in themselves deserve eternal wrath, and do actually make them liable to temporal strokes and fatherly chastisements, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, yet they can never be actually liable to eternal wrath, or the curse of the law; for they are dead to the law in Christ. And they can never fall from their union with Christ; nor can they be in Christ, and yet under condemnation, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ

Jesus." This is an inference drawn from that doctrine of the believer being dead to the law, delivered by the apostle, Rom. vii. 1—6; as is clear from the 2d, 3d, and 4th verses of the viii. chap. And, in this respect, the justified man is the blessed man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.

Second, The believer is accepted as righteous in God's sight. For he is "found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He could never be accepted of God as righteous, upon the account of his own righteousness, because, at best, it is but imperfect; and all righteousness, properly so called, which will abide a trial before the throne of God, is perfect. The very name of it implies perfection; for unless a work be perfectly conform to the law, it is not right, but wrong; and so cannot make a man righteous before God, whose judgment is according to truth. Yet, if justice demand a righteousness of one that is in Christ, upon which he may be accounted righteous before the Lord; surely shall such a one say, "In the Lord have I righteousness." The law is fulfilled, its commands are obeyed, its sanction is satisfied.

Thus the person united to Christ is justified. You may conceive of the whole proceeding herein in this manner. The avenger of blood pursuing the criminal, Christ, as the Saviour of lost sinners, doth, by the Spirit, apprehend him, and draw him to himself; and he by faith lays hold on Christ: so the Lord our righteousness and the unrighteous creature unite. From this union with Christ results a com-

munions with him, in his unsearchable riches; and, consequently, in his righteousness, that white raiment which he has for clothing of the naked. Thus the righteousness of Christ becomes his: and because it is his by unquestionable title, it is imputed to him; it is reckoned his in the judgment of God, which is always according to the truth of the thing. And so the believing sinner, having a righteousness which fully answers the demands of the law, he is pardoned and accepted as righteous. See Isa. xlv. 22, 24, 25. Rom. iii. 24. and chap. v. 1. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of those whom God justifieth? Can justice lay any thing to their charge? No, for it is satisfied. Can the law? No, for it has got all its demands of them in Jesus Christ: "I am crucified with Christ." What can the law require more after it has wounded their head, poured in wrath in full measure into their soul, and cut off their life, and brought it into the dust of death; in so far as it hath done all this to Jesus Christ, who is their head, Eph. i. 22. their soul, Acts ii. 25, 27. and their life, Col. iii. 4.? What is become of the sinner's own handwriting, which would prove the debt upon him? Christ has blotted it out. But, it may be, justice may get its eye upon it again: no, he took it out of the way. But, O that it had been torn in pieces, may the sinner say. Yea, so it is; the nails that pierced Christ's hands and feet are driven through it; he nailed it to his cross. Where is death, that stood before the sinner ready to devour him? Christ has "swallowed it up in victory." Glory, glory, glory to him that thus "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood!"

The *second* benefit flowing from the same spring of union with Christ, and coming by the way of justification, is *peace*; peace with God, and peace of conscience, according to the measure of the sense the justified have of their peace with God, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Whereas God was their enemy before, now he is reconciled to them in Christ; they are in a covenant of peace with him; and as Abraham was, so they are the friends of God. He is well pleased with them in his beloved Son. His word, which spoke terror to them formerly, now speaks peace, if they rightly take up its language. And there is love in all his dispensations towards them, which makes all work together for their good. Their consciences are purged of that guilt that some time lay upon them; his conscience-purifying blood streams through their souls, by virtue of their union with him: “How much more shall the blood of Christ—purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?” The bonds laid on their consciences, by the Spirit of God, acting as the spirit of bondage, are taken off, never more to be laid on by that hand. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.” Hereby the conscience is quieted as soon as the soul becomes conscious of the application of that blood; which falls out sooner or later, according to the measure of faith, and as the only wise God sees meet to time it. Many bury their guilt in the grave of an ill memory: conscience smarts a little; at length the man forgets his

sin, and there is an end of it : but that is only an ease before death. Business, or the affairs of life, often give ease in this case. When Cain is banished from the presence of the Lord, he falls a building of cities. When the evil spirit came upon Saul, he calls not for his Bible, nor for the priests to converse with him about his case, but for music, to play it away. So, many, when their consciences begin to be uneasy, they fill their heads and hands with business to divert themselves, and regain ease at any rate. Yea, some will sin over their convictions, and so get some ease to their consciences, as Hazael gave to his master by stifling him. Again, the performing of duties may give some ease to a disquieted conscience ; and this is all that legal professors have recourse to for quieting of their consciences. When conscience is wounded, they will pray, confess, mourn, and resolve to do so no more : and so they become whole again, without an application of the blood of Christ by faith. But they, whose consciences are rightly quieted, come for peace and purging to the blood of sprinkling.

Elihu shows us both the case and cure. Behold the case one may be in whom God has thoughts of love to. He darteth convictions into his conscience ; and makes them stick so fast, that he cannot rid himself of them : “ He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.” His very body sickens : “ He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain.” He loseth his stomach : “ His life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat.” His body pines away, so that there is nothing on him but skin and bone : “ His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be

seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out.” Though he is not prepared for death, he has no hopes of life: “His soul draweth near unto the grave, and (which is the height of his misery) his life to the destroyers;”—he is looking every moment when devils, these destroyers, these murderers, will come and carry away his soul to hell. O dreadful case! yet there is hope. God designs to “keep back his soul from the pit,” although he bring it forward to the brink of it. Now, see how the sick man is cured. The physician’s art cannot prevail here; the disease lies more inward than that his medicines can reach it. It is soul trouble that has brought the body into this disorder; and therefore the remedies must be applied to the sick man’s soul and conscience. The physician for this case must be a spiritual physician; the remedies must be spiritual, a righteousness, a ransom, or atonement. Upon the application of these, the soul is cured, the conscience is quieted, and the body recovers. “If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s: he shall return to the days of his youth: he shall pray unto God, and he shall be favourable unto him; and he shall see his face with joy.” The proper physician for this patient, is a messenger, an interpreter, that is, as some expositors, not without ground, understand it, the great Physician, Jesus Christ, whom Job had called his Redeemer. He is a messenger, the “messenger of the covenant of peace,” who

comes seasonably to the sick man. He is an interpreter, the great interpreter of God's counsels of love to sinners. "One among a thousand," even "the chief among ten thousand." "One chosen out of the people." One to whom "the Lord hath given the tongue of the learned—to speak a word in season to him that is weary." It is he that is with him, by his Spirit, now, to "convince him of righteousness;" as he was with him before, to "convince him of sin and judgment." His work now is, to show unto him his uprightness, or his righteousness, that is, the interpreter Christ his righteousness; which is the only righteousness arising from the paying of a ransom, and upon which a sinner is "delivered from going down to the pit." And thus Christ is said "to declare God's name," and to "preach righteousness." The phrase is remarkable; it is not to show unto the man, but unto man, his righteousness; which not obscurely intimates, that he is more than a man who shows or declareth this righteousness. Compare Amos iv. 13. "He that formed the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought." There seems to be in it a sweet allusion to the first declaration of this righteousness unto man, or, as the word is, unto Adam after the fall, while he lay under terror from the apprehensions of the wrath of God: which declaration was made by the messenger, the interpreter, namely, the eternal WORD, the Son of God, called, "The voice of the Lord God," and by him appearing probably in human shape. Now, while he by his Spirit is the preacher of righteousness to the man, it is supposed the man lays hold on the offered

righteousness; whereupon the ransom is applied to him, and he is delivered from going down to the pit, for God hath a ransom for him. This is intimated to him: God saith, “ Deliver him.” Hereupon his conscience, being purged by the blood of atonement, is pacified, and sweetly quieted: he shall pray unto God,—and see his face with joy, which before he beheld with horror. That is, in New Testament language, “ having an high priest over the house of God; he shall draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience.” But then, what becomes of the body, the weak and weary flesh? why, “ his flesh shall be fresher than a child’s; he shall return to the days of his youth.” Yea, “ all his bones (which were chastened with strong pain) shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?”

A *third* benefit flowing from union with Christ, is *adoption*. Believers being united to Christ, become children of God, and members of the family of heaven. By their union with him, who is the Son of God by nature, they become the sons of God by grace. As when a branch is cut off from one tree, and grafted into the branch of another; the ingrafted branch, by means of its union with the adopting branch, (as some not unfitly have called it,) is made a branch of the same stock with that into which it is ingrafted; so sinners being ingrafted into Jesus Christ, “ whose name is The Branch,” his Father is their Father, his God their God: and thus they, who are by nature children of the devil, become the children of God. They have the Spirit of adoption, namely, the Spirit of his Son, which

brings them to God, "as children to a father;" to pour out their complaints in his bosom, and to seek necessary supplies: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Under all their weaknesses they have fatherly pity and compassion shown them: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Although they were but foundlings, found in a desert land; yet, now that to them belongs the adoption, "he keeps them as the apple of his eye." Whosoever pursues them, they have a refuge: "His children shall have a place of refuge." In a time of common calamity, they have chambers of protection, where they may be hid, "until the indignation be overpast." And he is not only their refuge for protection, but their portion for provision, in that refuge: "Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." They are provided for, for eternity: "He hath prepared for them a city." And what he sees they have need of for time they shall not want: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Seasonable correction is likewise their privilege as sons: so they are not suffered to pass with their faults, as happens to others who are not children, but servants of the family, and will be turned out of doors for their miscarriages at length: "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" They are heirs of, and shall inherit the promises; nay, they are "heirs of

God," who himself is the portion of their inheritance, "and joint-heirs with Christ." And because they are the children of the Great King, and young heirs of glory, they have angels for their attendants, who are "sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation."

A *fourth* benefit is *sanctification*: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification." Being united to Christ, they partake of his Spirit, which is the Spirit of holiness. There is a fulness of the Spirit in Christ; and it is not like the fulness of a vessel which only retains what is poured into it; but it is the fulness of a fountain for diffusion and communication, which is always sending forth its waters, and yet is always full. The Spirit of Christ, that spiritual sap, which is in the stock, and from thence is communicated to the branches, is "the Spirit of grace." And where the Spirit of grace dwells, there will be found a complication of all graces. Holiness is not one grace only, but all the graces of the Spirit: It is a constellation of graces: it is all the graces in their seed and root. And as the sap, conveyed from the stock into the branch, goes through every part of it; so the Spirit of Christ sanctifies the whole man. The poison of sin was diffused through the whole spirit, soul and body of the man; and sanctifying grace pursues it into every corner. Every part of the man is sanctified, though no part is perfectly so. The truth we are sanctified by, is not held in the head, but runs, with its sanctifying influences, through heart and life. There are indeed some graces in every believer, which appear as top

branches above the rest; as meekness in Moses, patience in Job: but seeing there is in every child of God a holy principle going along with the holy law, in all the parts thereof, loving, liking, and approving of it, as appears from their universal respect to the commands of God, it is evident they are endowed with all the graces of the Spirit; because there can be no more in the effect, than there was in the cause.

Now, this sanctifying Spirit, whereof believers partake, is unto them, (1.) A spirit of mortification: "Through the Spirit they mortify the deeds of the body." Sin is crucified in them. They are planted together (namely with Christ) in the likeness of his death, which was a lingering death. Sin in the saint, though not quite dead, yet is dying. As when a tree has got such a stroke as reaches the heart of it, all the leaves and branches thereof begin to fade and decay; so, where the sanctifying Spirit comes, and breaks the power of sin, there is a gradual ceasing from it, and dying to it, in the whole man; so that he no longer lives in the flesh to the lusts of men. He does not make sin his business; it is not his great design to seek himself, and to satisfy his corrupt inclinations: but he is for Emmanuel's land; and is walking in the highway to it, the way which is called, "The way of holiness;" (2.) The Spirit is a spirit of vivification to them; for he is the Spirit of life, and makes them live unto righteousness: "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." These that have been planted together with Christ in the likeness of his death, shall be also in the likeness of

his resurrection. At Christ's resurrection, when his soul was re-united with his body, every member of that blessed body was enabled again to perform the actions of life: so, the soul being influenced by the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, is enabled more and more to perform all the actions of spiritual life. And as the whole of the law, and not some scraps of it only, is written on the holy heart; so believers are enabled to transcribe that law into their conversation. And although they cannot write one line of it without blots; yet God, for Christ's sake, accepts of the performances in point of sanctification; they being disciples to his own Son, and led by his own Spirit.

This sanctifying Spirit, communicated by the Lord Jesus to his members, is the spiritual nourishment the branches have from the stock into which they are ingrafted; whereby the life of grace, given them in regeneration, is preserved, continued, and actuated. It is the nourishment whereby the new creature liveth, and is nourished up towards perfection. Spiritual life needs to be fed, and must have supply of nourishment; and believers derive the same from Christ their head, whom the Father has constituted the head of influences to all his members: "And not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered," or supplied, &c. Now, this supply is the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The saints feed richly, eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood, for their spiritual nourishment; yet our Lord himself teacheth us, that it is the Spirit that quickeneth, even that Spirit who dwells in that blessed body, John vi. 63. The human nature is united to

the divine nature, in the person of the Son, and so (like the bowl in Zechariah's candlestick, Zech. iv.) lies at the fountain-head, as the glorious means of conveyance of influences, from the fountain of the Deity; and receives not the Spirit by measure, but ever hath a fulness of the Spirit, by reason of that personal union. Hence, believers being united to the man Christ, (as the seven lamps to the bowl, by their seven pipes, Zech. iv. 2.) his flesh is to them meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed: for feeding on that blessed body, (that is, effectually applying Christ to their souls by faith,) they partake more and more of that Spirit who dwelleth therein, to their spiritual nourishment. The holiness of God could never admit of an immediate union with the sinful creature, nor (consequently) an immediate communion with it; yet, the creature could not live the life of grace, without communion with the fountain of life: therefore, that the honour of God's holiness, and the salvation of sinners, might jointly be provided for, the second person of the glorious Trinity took, into a personal union with himself, a sinless human nature; that so this holy, harmless, and undefiled humanity, might immediately receive a fulness of the Spirit, of which he might communicate to his members by his divine power and efficacy. What though the parts of mystical Christ (namely, the head and the members) are not contiguous, as joined together in the way of a corporal union? the union is not therefore the less real and effectual. Yea, our Lord himself shows us, that though we should eat his flesh, in a corporal and carnal manner, yet it would profit nothing, John vi. 63. we would

not be one whit holier thereby. But the members of Christ on earth are united to their head in heaven, by the invisible bond of the self-same Spirit dwelling in both; in him as the head, and in them as the members, even as the wheels in Ezekiel's vision were not contiguous to the living creatures, yet were united to them by an invisible bond of one spirit in both; so that, "when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.—For," says the prophet, "the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels."

Hence we may see the difference betwixt true sanctification, and that shadow of it which is to be found amongst some strict professors of Christianity, who yet are not true Christians, are not regenerated by the Spirit of Christ; and is of the same kind with what has appeared in many sober heathens. True sanctification is the result of the soul's union with the holy Jesus, the first and immediate receptacle of the sanctifying Spirit; out of whose fulness his members do, by virtue of their union with him, receive sanctifying influences. The other is the mere product of the man's own spirit, which, whatever it has or seems to have of the matter of true holiness, yet does not arise from the supernatural principles, nor to the high aims and ends thereof: for, as it comes from self, so it runs out into the dead sea of self again; and lies as wide of true holiness, as nature doth of grace. How is it possible there should be true sanctification without Christ? Can there be true sanctification, without partaking of the Spirit of holiness? can we partake of that Spirit, but by

Jesus Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life?” The falling dew shall as soon make its way through the flinty rock, as influences of grace shall come from God to sinners, any other way, but through him whom the Father hath constituted the head of influences: “For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.” “And not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” Hence see how it comes to pass that many fall away from their seeming sanctification, and never recover; it is because they are not branches truly knit to the true vine. Meanwhile others recover from their decays, because of their union with the life-giving stock, by the quickening Spirit: “They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.”

A *fifth* benefit is *growth in grace*. “Having nourishment ministered, they increase with the increase of God.” “The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.” Grace is of a growing nature: in the way to Zion they go “from strength to strength.” Though the holy man be at first a little child in grace, yet, at length, he becomes a young man, a father. If a branch grafted into a stock never grows, it is a plain evidence of its not having knit with the stock.

But some may perhaps say, if all true Christians be growing ones, what shall be said of those, who, instead of growing, are going back? I answer, First, There is a great difference betwixt the Christians growing simply, and his growing at all times.

All true Christians do grow ; but I do not say they grow at all times. A tree that has life and nourishment grows to its perfection, yet it is not always growing ; it grows not in the winter. Christians also have their winters, wherein the influences of grace necessary for growth are ceased. It is by faith the believer derives gracious influences from Jesus Christ ; like as each lamp in the candlestick received oil from the bowl, by the pipe going betwixt them, Zech. iv. 2. Now, if that pipe be stopped, if the saint's faith lie dormant and inactive, then all the rest of the graces will become dim, and seem ready to be extinguished. In consequence whereof, depraved nature will gather strength, and become active. What then will become of the soul ? Why, there is still one sure ground of hope. The saint's faith is not as the hypocrite's, like a pipe laid short of the fountain, whereby there can be no conveyance : it still remains a bond of union betwixt Christ and the soul ; and therefore, because Christ lives, the believer shall live also : " They that dwell under his shadow shall return : they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine." In the worst of times the saints have a principle of growth in them : " His seed remaineth in him." And therefore, after decays they revive again, namely, when the winter is over, and the Sun of righteousness returns to them with his warm influences. Secondly, Christians may mistake their growth, and that two ways. (1.) By judging of their case according to their present feeling. They observe themselves, and cannot perceive themselves to be growing : but there is no reason thence to conclude they are not growing : " The seed springs and grows

up, he knoweth not how." Should one fix his eye ever so steadfastly on the sun running his race, or on a growing tree, he would not perceive the sun moving, nor the tree growing: but if he compare the tree as it now is, with what it was some years ago, and consider the place in the heavens where the sun was in the morning, he will certainly perceive the tree has grown and the sun has moved. In like manner may the Christian know whether he be in a growing or declining state, by comparing his present with his former condition. (2.) Christians may mistake their case, by measuring their growth by advances of the top only, not of the root. Though a man be not growing taller, he may be growing stronger. If a tree be taking with the ground, fixing itself in the earth, and spreading out its roots, it is certainly growing, though it be nothing taller than formerly. So, though a Christian may want the sweet consolation and flashes of affection which sometimes he has had, yet if he be growing in humility, self-denial, and sense of needy dependence on Jesus Christ, he is a growing Christian: "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

Quest. But do hypocrites grow at all? And if so, how shall we distinguish betwixt their growth and true Christian growth? *Ans.* To the first part of the question, Hypocrites do grow. The tares have their growth as well as the wheat; and the seed that fell among thorns did spring up, only it did bring no fruit to perfection. Yea, a true Christian may have a false growth. James and John seemed to grow in the grace of holy zeal, when their spirits grew so hot in the cause of Christ, that they would

have fired whole villages for not receiving their Lord and Master : “ They said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did ? ” But it was indeed no such thing ; and therefore “ he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. ” To the second part of the question, it is answered, That there is a peculiar beauty in true Christian growth, distinguishing it from all false growth ; it is universal, regular, proportionable. It is a “ growing up into him in all things, which is the head. ” The growing Christian grows proportionably in all the parts of the new man. Under the kindly influences of the Sun of righteousness, believers “ grow up as calves of the stall. ” Ye would think it a monstrous growth in these creatures, if you saw their heads grow, and not their bodies. Ay, but such is the growth of many in religion. They grow like rickety children, who have a big head, but a slender body : they get more knowledge into their heads, but no more holiness into their hearts and lives. They grow very hot outwardly, but very cold inwardly ; like men in a fit of the ague. They are more taken up about the externals of religion than formerly, yet as great strangers to the power of godliness as ever. If a garden is watered with the hand, some of the plants will readily get much, some little, and some no water at all ; and therefore some wither, while others are coming forward : but after a shower from the clouds, all come forward together. In like manner, all the graces of the Spirit grow proportionably, by the special influences of divine grace. The branches ingrafted in Christ, growing aright,

do grow in all the several ways of growth at once. They grow inward into Christ, uniting more closely with him, and cleaving more firmly to him, as the head of influences, which is the spring of all other true Christian growth. They grow outward, in good works in their life and conversation. They not only, with Naphtali, give goodly words; but, like Joseph, they are fruitful boughs. They grow upward in heavenly-mindedness and contempt of the world, for "their conversation is in heaven." And, finally, they grow downward, in humility and self-loathing. The branches of the largest growth in Christ are, in their own eyes, "less than the least of all saints,—the chief of sinners,—more brutish than any man." They see they can do nothing, no, not so much as to "think any thing as of themselves;" that they deserve nothing, being "not worthy of the least of all the mercies showed unto them."

A *sixth* benefit is *fruitfulness*. The branch ingrafted into Christ is not barren, but brings forth fruit. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." For that very end are souls married to Christ, that they may bring forth fruit unto God. They may be branches in Christ by profession, but not by real implantation, that are barren branches. Whosoever are united to Christ bring forth the fruit of gospel obedience and true holiness. Faith is always followed with good works. The believer is not only come out of his natural state, but he has put off his reigning lusts in the which he walked, being dead while he lived in them. Col. iii. 7, 8. Now "the fruit of the Spirit in him" is in all goodness." The fruits of holiness

will be found in the hearts, lips, and lives of those who are united to Christ. The hidden man of the heart is not only a temple built for God, and consecrated to him, but used and employed for him; where love, fear, trust, and all the other parts of unseen religion are exercised: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit." The heart is no more the devil's common, where thoughts go free; for there even vain thoughts are hated: but it is God's enclosure, hedged about as a garden for him. It is true, there are weeds of corruption there, because the ground is not yet perfectly healed; but the man, in the day of his new creation, is set to dress it, and keep it. A live coal from the altar has touched his lips, and they are purified: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that speaketh the truth in his heart; he that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour." There may be indeed a smooth tongue where there is a false heart; the voice may be Jacob's, while the hands are Esau's: but "if any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." The power of godliness will rule over the tongue, though a world of iniquity. The fruits of holiness will be found in his outward conversation; for he hath clean hands, as well as a pure heart. He is a godly man, and religiously discharges the duties of the first table of the law: he is a righteous man, and honestly performs the duties of the second table. In his conversation he is a good Christian, and a good neighbour too. He carries it towards God as if men's eyes were upon

him, and towards men as believing God's eye to be upon him. These things which God hath joined in his law, he dare not in his practice put asunder.

Thus the branches in Christ are full of good fruits. And those fruits are a cluster of vital actions, whereof Jesus Christ is the principle and end. The principle—for he lives in them, and the life they live is “by the faith of the Son of God :” the end—for they live to him, and “to them to live is Christ.” The duties of religion are in the world like fatherless children : some will not take them in, because they never loved them nor their Father ; some take them in because they may be serviceable to them : but the saints take them in for their Father's sake, that is, for Christ's sake ; and they are lovely in their eyes, because they are like him. O ! whence is this new life of the saints ? surely it could never have been drawn out of the natural powers of their souls by the united force of all created power.

If you ask me, How your nourishment, growth, and fruitfulness may be forwarded ? I offer these few advices : (1.) Make sure work as to your knitting with the stock by faith unfeigned, and beware of hypocrisy. A branch that is not sound at the heart will certainly wither. The trees of the Lord's planting are trees of righteousness : so, when others fade, they bring forth fruit. Hypocrisy is a disease in the vitals of religion, which will consume all at length. Sincerity of grace will make it lasting, be it ever so weak ; as the smallest twig that is sound at the heart will draw nourishment from the stock, and grow, while the greatest bough that is rotten can never recover, because it receives no nourishment. (2.) Labour to be steadfast in the truths and ways of God.

An unsettled and wavering judgment is a great enemy to Christian growth and fruitfulness, as the apostle teaches: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,—but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." (3.) Endeavour to cut off the suckers, as gardeners do, that their trees may thrive. These are unmortified lusts: therefore, "mortify your members that are upon the earth." When the Israelites got meat to their lusts, they got leanness to their souls. They must refuse the cravings of inordinate affections, who would have their souls to prosper. Lastly, Improve for these ends, the ordinances of God. The courts of our God are the place where the trees of righteousness flourish; the waters of the sanctuary are the means appointed of God to cause his people to grow as willows by the water courses. Therefore, drink in with "desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Come to these wells of salvation; not to look at them only, but to draw water out of them. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is, in a special manner, appointed for these ends. It is not only a solemn public profession, and a seal of our union and communion with Christ, but it is a means of most intimate communion with him, and strengthens our union with him, our faith, love, repentance, and other graces: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" And we "have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Give yourselves unto prayer;

open your mouths wide, and he will fill them. By these means the branches in Christ may be further nourished, grow up, and bring forth much fruit.

A *seventh* benefit is, The *acceptance* of their fruits of holiness before the Lord. Though they be very imperfect, they are accepted, because they savour of Christ, the blessed stock which the branches grow upon; while the fruits of others are rejected of God: "And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain, and his offering, he had no respect." "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." O how defective are the saint's duties in the eye of the law! The believer himself espies many faults in his best performances; yet the Lord graciously receives them. There is no grace planted in the heart, but there is a weed of corruption hard by its side, while the saints are in this lower world. Their very sincerity is not without mixture of dissimulation or hypocrisy. Hence there are defects in the exercise of every grace, in the performance of every duty; depraved nature always drops something to stain their best works. There is still a mixture of darkness with their clearest light. Yet this does not mar their acceptance: "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?" or, as the dawning? Behold now Christ's spouse is esteemed and accepted of her Lord, even when she looks forth as the morning, whose beauty is mixed with the blackness of the night! So the very dawning of grace and good-will to Christ, grace peeping out from under a mass of darkness in believers, is pleasant and acceptable to him. Though the remains of unbelief make their hand of faith to shake and tremble; yet the Lord is so well pleased with it,

that he employs it to carry away pardons and supplies of grace from the throne of grace, and the fountain of grace. His faith was effectual who cried out with tears, and said, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Though the remains of sensual affections make the flame of their love weak and smoky, he turns his eyes from the smoke, and beholds the flame, how fair it is, "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!" Their good works are accepted: their cups of cold water, given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not want a reward. Though they cannot offer for the tabernacle gold, silver, and brass, and onyx-stones, let them come forward with what they have: if it were but goats' hair, it shall not be rejected; if it were but rams' skins, they shall be kindly accepted; for they are dyed red, dipped by faith in the Mediator's blood, and so presented unto God. A very ordinary work done in faith, and from faith, if it were but the bestowing of a box of ointment on Christ, it shall never be forgotten. Even "a cup of cold water only given to one of Christ's little ones in the name of a disciple, shall be rewarded." Nay, not a good word for Christ shall drop from their mouths, but it shall be registered in God's book of remembrance; nor shall a tear drop from their eyes for him, but he will put it in his bottle. Their will is accepted for the deed; their sorrow for the want of will, for the will itself: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Their groanings, when they cannot well word their desires, are heard in heaven; the meaning of these groans is well known there, and they will be returned like the dove with an olive branch

of peace in her mouth. Their mites are better than other men's talents; their lisping and broken sentences are more pleasant to their Father in heaven, than the most fluent and flourishing speeches of those that are not in Christ. The Mediator takes their petitions, blots out some parts, rectifies others, and then presents them to the Father, in consequence whereof they pass in the court of heaven.

Every true Christian is a temple to God. If ye look for sacrifices, they are not wanting there: they offer the sacrifice of praise, and they do good; with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Christ himself is the altar that sanctifies the gift. If we look for incense, it is there too. The graces of the Spirit are found in their hearts: and the spirit of a crucified Christ fires them and puts them in exercise; like as the fire was brought from the altar of burnt-offering to set the incense on flame; then they mount heavenward like pillars of smoke. But the best of incense will leave ashes behind it. Yes, indeed; but as the priest took away the ashes of the incense in a golden dish, and threw them out, so our great High-priest takes away the ashes and refuse of all the saints' services by his mediation in their behalf.

An *eighth* benefit flowing from union with Christ, is *establishment*. The Christian cannot fall away, but must persevere unto the end: "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Indeed, if a branch do not knit with the stock, it will fall away when shaking winds arise; but the branch knit to the stock stands fast whatever wind blows. Sometimes a stormy wind of temptation blows, and tosseth the branches in Christ the true vine: but their union with him is their security;

moved they may be, but removed they never can be : the Lord “ will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape.” Calms are never of any continuance ; there is almost always some wind blowing ; and therefore branches are rarely altogether at rest ; but sometimes violent winds arise, which threaten to rend them from off their stock. Even so it is with saints ; they are daily put to it to keep their ground against temptation ; but sometimes the wind riseth so high, and blows so furiously, that it makes even top branches to sweep the ground ; yet, being knit to Christ their stock, they get up again in spite of the most violent efforts of the prince of the power of the air : “ When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.” But the Christian improves by this trial ; and is so far from being damaged, that he is benefited by it, in so far as it discovers what hold the soul has of Christ, and what hold Christ has of the soul. And as the wind in the bellows which would blow out the candle, blows up the fire, even so it often comes to pass, that such temptations do enliven the true Christian, awakening the graces of the Spirit in him ; and, by that means, discover both the reality and the strength of grace in him. And hence, as Luther, that great man of God, saith, ‘ One Christian, who hath had experience of temptation, is worth a thousand others.’

Sometimes a stormy wind of trouble and persecution, from the men of the world, blows upon the vine, that is, mystical Christ ; but union with the stock is a sufficient security to the branches. In a time of the church’s peace and outward prosperity, while the angels hold the winds that they blow not,

there are a great many branches taken up, and put into the stock, which never knit with it nor live by it, though they be bound up with it by the bonds of external ordinances. Yea, some strong boughs of that sort, when they fall, will, by their weight, carry others of their own kind quite down to the earth with them; and will bruise and press down some true branches, in such a manner, that they would also fall off, were it not for their being knit to the stock; in virtue whereof they get up their heads again, and cannot fall off, because of that fast hold the stock has of them. Then it is that many branches, some time high and eminent, are found lying on the earth withered, and fit to be gathered up and cast into the fire: "And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and, because they had not root, they withered away." "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." But however violently the winds blow, none of the truly ingrafted branches that are knit with the stock, are found missing when the storm is changed into a calm: "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." The least twig growing in Christ shall stand it out, and subsist; when the tallest cedars, growing on their own root, shall be laid flat on the ground: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" If men be solid substantial Christians, they will not be like chaff tossed to and fro with every wind; having so much of the liveliness, that they have nothing of the stone: and if they be lively Christians, whose

spirit will stir in them, as Paul's did when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, they will not lie like stones, to be turned over hither and thither, cut and carved according to the lusts of men, having so much of the stone as leaves nothing of liveliness in them.

Our God's house is a great house, wherein are not only vessels of gold, but also of earth. Both these are apt to contract filthiness; and therefore, when God brings trouble upon the church, he hath an eye to both. As for the vessels of God, they are not destroyed, but purged by a fiery trial in the furnace of affliction, as goldsmiths purge their gold: "And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross." But destruction is to the vessels of earth, they shall be broken in shivers as a potter's vessel. And the destruction (or breaking) of the transgressors, and of the sinners, shall be together. It seems to be an allusion to that law, for breaking the vessels of earth when unclean; while vessels of wood, and consequently vessels of gold, were only to be rinsed, Lev. xv. 12.

A *ninth* benefit is *support*. If thou be a branch ingrafted in Christ, the root beareth thee. The believer leans on Christ; as a weak woman in a journey, leaning upon her beloved husband. He stays himself upon him, as a feeble old man stays himself on his staff. He rolls himself on him, as one rolls a burden he is not able to walk under, off his own back upon another who is able to bear it. There are many weights to hang upon and press down the branches in Christ the true vine. But ye know, whatever weights hang on branches, the stock

bears all; it bears the branch, and the weight that is upon it too.

First, Christ supports believers in him under a weight of outward troubles. That is a large promise: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." See how David was supported under a heavy load, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. His city Ziklag was burnt, his wives were taken captives, his men spoke of stoning him: nothing was left him but his God and his faith; but by his faith he encouraged himself in his God. The Lord comes and lays his cross on his people's shoulders; it presseth them down; they are like to sink under it, and therefore cry, "Master, save us, we perish:" but he supports them under their burden; he bears them up, and they bear their cross. Thus the Christian, having a weight of outward troubles upon him, goes lightly under his burden, having withal the everlasting arms underneath him. The Christian has a spring of comfort which he cannot lose; and therefore never wants something to support him. If one have all his riches in money, robbers may take these away; and then what has he more? But though the landed man be robbed of his money, yet his lands remain for his support. They that build their comfort on worldly goods, may quickly be comfortless; but they that are united to Christ, shall find comfort, when all the streams of worldly enjoyments are dried up: "Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?" as if he should say, 'Though my substance is gone; though my servants, my children, my health, and soundness of body, are all gone; yet my grace is not gone too.

Though the Sabeans have driven away my oxen and asses, and the Chaldeans have driven away my camels; they have not driven away my faith and my hope too: these are yet in me, they are not driven from me; so that by them I can fetch comfort from heaven, when I can have none from earth.'

Second, Christ supports his people under a weight of inward troubles and discouragements. Many times heart and flesh fail them, but then God is the strength of their heart. They may have a weight of guilt pressing them. This is a load that will make their spirits to sink: but he takes it off, and puts a pardon in their hand, while they cast their burden over upon him. The Christian sometimes, through carelessness, loseth his discharge; he cannot find it, however he search for it. The law takes that opportunity, and sends up a process against him for a debt paid already. God hides his face, and the soul is distressed. Many arrows go through the heart now: many long accounts are laid before the man, which he reads and acknowledges. What else keeps him from sinking utterly under discouragements in this case, but that the everlasting arms of a Mediator are underneath him, and that he relies upon the great cautioner? Further, they may have a weight of strong lusts pressing them. They have a body of death upon them. Death is a weight that presseth the soul out of the body. One lively lust will sometimes lie so heavy on a child of God, that he can no more remove it, than a child could throw a giant from off him. How then are they supported under a whole body of death? Why, their support is from the root that bears them, from

the everlasting arm that is underneath them. His grace is sufficient for them. The great stay of the believer is not the grace of God within him; that is a well whose streams sometimes run dry: but it is the grace of God without him, the grace that is in Jesus Christ; which is an overflowing fountain, to which the believer can never come amiss. For the apostle tells us it is the power of Christ. Most gladly therefore, saith he, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me, or tabernacle above me, as the cloud of glory did on the Israelites, which God spread for a covering or shelter to them in the wilderness. So that the believer in this combat, like the eagle, first flies aloft (by faith), and then comes down on the prey: "They looked to him, and were lightened." And, finally, they have a weight of weakness and wants upon them: but they cast over that burden on the Lord their strength, and he sustains them. Though they be destitute, (as a shrub in the wilderness, which the foot of every beast may tread down,) the Lord will regard them. It is no marvel the weakest plant be safe in a garden: but our Lord Jesus Christ is a hedge for protection to his weak and destitute ones, even in a wilderness.

Object. But if the saints be so supported, how is it that they fall so often under temptations and discouragements? *Ans.* (1.) How low soever they fall at any time, they never fall off; and that is a great matter. They "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Hypocrites may fall, so as to fall off, and fall into the pit. But though the child of God may fall, and that so low as the

waters go over his head, yet there is still a bond of union betwixt Christ and him: the chain is not broken; he will not go to the ground; he will be drawn up again: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." (2.) The falls of the saints flow from their not improving their union with Christ, their not making use of him by faith, for staying or bearing them up: "I had fainted, unless I had believed." While the nurse holds the child in her arms, it cannot fall to the ground: yet if the unwary child hold not by her, it may fall backward in her arms to its great hurt. Thus David's fall broke his bones, but it did not break the bond of union betwixt Christ and him: the Holy Spirit, the bond of that union, was not taken from him.

The *last* benefit I shall name is, *the special care of the husbandman*: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.—Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Believers, by virtue of their union with Christ, are the object of God's special care and providence. Mystical Christ is God's vine, other societies in the world are but wild olive-trees. The men of the world are but God's out-field; the saints are his vineyard, which he has a special property in, and a special concern for: "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." He that slumbers not nor sleeps, is the keeper of it; he does keep it, lest any hurt it; he will keep it night and day: he, in whose hands is the dew of heaven, will water it every moment, Isa. xxvii. 3. He dresseth and purgeth it, in

order to further fruitfulness, John xv. 2. He cuts off the luxuriant twigs that mar the fruitfulness of the branch. This is done especially by the word, and by the cross or afflictions. The saints need the ministry of the word as much as the vineyard needeth one to dress and prune the vines: "We are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building." And they need the cross too, 1 Pet. i. 6. And therefore, if we should reckon the cross amongst the benefits flowing to believers from their union with Christ, I judge we should not reckon amiss. Sure I am, in their sufferings, they suffer with him. And the assurances they have of the cross, have rather the nature of a promise than of a threatening: "If his children forsake my law—then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." The covenant of grace does truly beat the spears of affliction into pruning-hooks, to them that are in Christ. "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." Why then should we be angry with our cross? Why should we be frightened at it? The believer must take up his cross, and follow his leader, the Lord Jesus Christ: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." Yea, he must take up his holiday's cross too: "Thou hast called, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about." The church of the Jews had, of a long time, many a pleasant meeting at the temple on solemn days for the worship of God; but they got a solemnity of

another nature, when God called together, about the temple and city, the Chaldean army, that burnt the temple, and laid Jerusalem on heaps. And now that the church of God is yet militant in this lower region, how can it be but the clouds will return after the rain? But the cross of Christ (which name the saints' troubles do bear) is a kindly name to the believer. It is a cross indeed; but not to the believer's graces, but to his corruptions. The hypocrites' seeming graces may indeed breathe out their last on a cross, as those of the stony-ground hearers did: "And when the sun (of persecution) was up, they were scorched: and, because they had no root, they withered away." But never did one of the real graces in a believer die upon the cross yet. Nay, as the candle shines brightest in the night, and the fire burns fiercest in intense frost; so the believer's graces are, ordinarily, most vigorous in a time of trouble.

There is a certain pleasure and sweetness in the cross, to them who have their senses exercised to discern and to find it out: there is a certain sweetness in one's seeing himself upon his trials for heaven, and standing candidate for glory: there is a pleasure in travelling over these mountains, where the Christian can see the prints of Christ's own feet, and the footsteps of the flock who have been there before him. How pleasant is it to a saint, in the exercise of grace, to see how a good God crosseth his corrupt inclinations, and prevents his folly! How refined a pleasure is there in observing how God draws away provision from unruly lusts, and so pincheth them that the Christian may get them governed!

Of a truth there is a paradise within this thorn hedge. Many a time the people of God are in bonds, which are never loosed till they be bound with cords of affliction. God takes them, and throws them into a fiery furnace, that burns off their bonds; and then, like the three children, Dan. iii. 25. they are loose, walking in the midst of the fire. God gives his children a potion, with one bitter ingredient: if that will not work upon them, he will put in a second, a third, and so on, as there is need, that they may work together for their good. They are often found in such ways, as that the cross is the happiest foot they can meet with; and well may they salute it, as David did Abigail, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me." Worldly things are often such a load to the Christian, that he moves but very slowly heavenward. God sends a wind of trouble that blows the burden off, and then he walks more speedily on his way, after God hath drawn some gilded earth from him, that was drawing his heart away from God. "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." It was an observation of a heathen moralist, that no history makes mention of any man who hath been made better by riches. I doubt if our modern histories can supply the defect of ancient histories on this point. But sure I am, many have been the worse of riches: thousands have been hugged to death in the embraces of a smiling world; and many good men have got wounds from outward prosperity, that behooved to be cured by the cross. I remember to have read of one, who, having an im-

posthume in his breast, had in vain used the help of physicians ; but being wounded with a sword, the imposthume broke, and his life was saved by that accident, which threatened immediate death. Often have spiritual imposthumes gathered in the breasts of God's people in times of outward prosperity, and been thus broken by the cross. It is kindly for believers to be healed by stripes : although they are usually so weak as to cry out for fear at the sight of the pruning-hook, as if it were the destroying axe ; and to think the Lord is coming to kill them, when he is indeed coming to cure them.

I shall now conclude, by addressing a few words, first, to saints ; and, next, to sinners.

I. To you that are saints, I say,

First, Strive to obtain and keep up actual communion and fellowship with Jesus Christ ; that is, to be still deriving fresh supplies of grace, from the fountain thereof in him by faith ; and making suitable returns of them, in the exercise of grace, and holy obedience. Beware of estrangement betwixt Christ and your souls. If it has got in already, (which seems to be the case of many this day,) endeavour to get it removed. The warm sun of outward peace and prosperity has caused some cast their cloak of religion from them, who held it fast when the wind of trouble was blowing upon them : and “ will ye also go away.” The basest ingratitude is stamped on your slighting of communion with Christ. “ Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness ? Wherefore say my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee ? ” O beloved ! is this your kindness to your friend ? Re-

member, I pray you, this is a very ill chosen time to live at a distance from God :—it is a time in which divine Providence frowns upon the land we live in; the clouds of wrath are gathering, and are thick above our heads. It is not a time for you to be out of your chambers. They that now are walking most closely with God, may have enough ado to stand when the trial comes : how hard will it be for others then, who are like to be surprised with troubles, when guilt is lying on their consciences unre-moved. To be awakened out of a sound sleep, and cast into a raging sea, as Jonah was, will be a fearful trial. Wherefore, break down your idols of jealousy, mortify those lusts, those irregular appetites and desires, that have stolen away your hearts, and left you like Samson, without his hair, and say, “I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.”

Secondly, Walk as becomes those that are united to Christ. Evidence your union with him, by walking as he also walked. If ye be brought from under the power of darkness, let your light shine before men. Shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, as the lantern holds the candle, which, being in it, shines through it. Now that ye profess Christ to be in you, let his image shine forth in your conversation; and remember the business of your lives is to prove, by practical arguments, what ye profess.

1. You know the character of a wife—“she that is married careth how she may please her husband.” Go you and do likewise; “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” This is the great business of

life : you must please him, though it should displease all the world. What he hates must be hateful to you, because he hates it. Whatever lusts come in suit of your hearts, deny them, seeing the grace of God has appeared, teaching so to do. And you are joined to the Lord. Let him be a covering to your eyes ; for you have not your choice to make, it is made already, and you must not dishonour your Head. “ Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid,” says the apostle. Wilt thou take that heart of thine, which is Christ’s dwelling-place, and lodge his enemies there? Wilt thou take that body, which is his temple, and defile it, by using the members thereof as the instruments of sin?

2. Be careful to bring forth fruit, and much fruit. The branch well laden with fruit, is the glory of the vine, and of the husbandman too : “ Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.”

3. Be heavenly-minded, and maintain a holy contempt of the world. Ye are united to Christ, he is your Head and Husband, and is in heaven ; wherefore your hearts should be there also : “ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.” Let the serpent’s seed go on their belly, and eat the dust of this earth : but let the members of Christ be ashamed to bow down and feed with them.

4. Live and act dependently, depending by faith on Jesus Christ. That which grows on its own root is a tree, not a branch. It is of the nature of a branch, to depend on the stock for all, and derive all

its sap from thence. Depend on him for life, light, strength, and all spiritual benefits. “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” For this cause, in the mystical union strength is united to weakness, life to death, and heaven to earth: that weakness, death, and earth, may mount up on borrowed wings. Depend on him for temporal benefits also: “Give us this day our daily bread.” If we have trusted him with our eternal concerns, let us be ashamed to distrust him in the matter of our provision in the world.

Lastly, Be of a meek disposition, and a uniting temper with the fellow-members of Christ’s body, as being united to the meek Jesus, the blessed centre of union. There is a prophecy to this purpose concerning the kingdom of Christ: “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.” It is an allusion to the beasts in Noah’s ark. The beasts of prey, that were wont to kill and devour others, when once they came into the ark, lay down in peace with them: the lamb was in no hazard by the wolf there, nor the kid by the leopard. There was a beautiful accomplishment of it in the primitive church: “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” And this prevails in all the members of Christ, according to the measure of the grace of God in them. Oh! it is sad to see Christ’s lilies as thorns in one another’s sides; and Christ’s lambs devouring one another like lions: yet it must be remembered, that sin is no proper cement for the members of Christ, though Herod and Pontius Pilate may be made friends that way. The apostle’s

rule is plain: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness." To follow peace no further than our humour, credit, and such like things will allow us, it is too short: to pursue it further than holiness, that is, conformity to the divine will, allows us, is too far. Peace is precious, yet it may be bought too dear: wherefore we must rather want it than purchase it at the expense of truth or holiness. But otherwise it cannot be over-dear bought, and it will always be precious in the eyes of the sons of peace.

II. And now, sinners, what shall I say to you? I have given you some view of the privileges of those in the state of grace: ye have seen them afar off; but, alas! they are not yours, because ye are not Christ's. The sinfulness of an unregenerate state is yours; and the misery of it is yours also: but ye have neither part nor lot in this matter. The guilt of all your sins lies upon you; ye have no part in the righteousness of Christ. There is no peace to you, no peace with God, no true peace of conscience; for ye have no saving interest in the great Peace-maker. Ye are none of God's family: the adoption we spoke of belongs not to you. Ye have no part in the Spirit of sanctification; and, in one word, ye have no "inheritance among them that are sanctified." All I can say to you in this matter, is, that the case is not desperate; they may yet be yours: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Heaven is proposing a union with earth still, and the gates of the city of refuge are not yet closed;—O! that we could compel you to come in.

STATE IV.

THE ETERNAL STATE; OR, STATE OF CONSUMMATE HAPPINESS OR MISERY.

HEAD I.

OF DEATH.

JOB xxx. 23.

“ For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.”

I COME now to discourse of man's eternal state, into which he enters by death. Of this entrance, Job takes a solemn serious view, in the words of the text, which contain a general truth, and a particular application of it. The general truth is supposed; namely, that all men must, by death, remove out of this world: they must die. But whither must they go? They must go to the house appointed for all living: to the grave, that darksome, gloomy, solitary house in the land of forgetfulness. Wheresoever the body is laid up till the resurrection, thither, as to a dwelling-house, death brings us home. While we are in the body, we are but in a lodging-house. When we come to our grave, we come to our home, our long home. Man's life is a stream, running into death's devouring deeps. They who now live

in palaces, must quit them, and go home to this house; and they who have not where to lay their heads, shall thus have a house at length. It is appointed for all, by him whose counsel shall stand. This appointment cannot be shifted; it is a law which mortals cannot transgress. Job's application of this general truth to himself, is expressed in these words: "I know that thou wilt bring me to death," &c. He knew that he behooved to meet with death; that his soul and body behooved to part; that God, who had made the declaration, would certainly see it kept. Sometimes Job was inviting death to come to him, and carry him home to his house; yea, he was in hazard of running to it before the time: "My soul chooseth strangling and death, rather than my life." But here he considers God would bring him to it; yea, bring him back to it, as the word imports. Job knew this, he had laid his account with it, and was looking for it.

DOCTRINE—*All must die.*

Although this doctrine be confirmed by the experience of all former generations, ever since Abel entered into the house appointed for all living, and though the living know that they shall die; yet it is needful to discourse of the certainty of death, that it may be impressed on the mind, and duly considered.

Wherefore consider, *first*, There is an unalterable statute of death under which men are concluded: "It is appointed unto men once to die." It is laid up for them, and cannot miss it, seeing God has designed and reserved it for them. There is no

peradventure in it: "We must needs die." Though some men will not hear of death, yet every man must see death. Death is a champion all must grapple with: we must enter the lists with it, and it will have the mastery: "There is no man that hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death." They indeed who are found alive at Christ's coming, "shall all be changed." But that change will be equivalent to death, will answer the purpose of it. All other persons must go the common road, the way of all flesh. *Secondly*, Let us consult daily observation. Every man "seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and brutish person." There is room enough on this earth for us, notwithstanding of the multitudes that were upon it before us: they are gone to make room for us, as we must depart to leave room for others. It is long since death began to transport men into another world, and vast multitudes are gone thither already; yet death is carrying off new inhabitants daily, to the house appointed for all living. Who could ever hear the grave say, It is enough? Long has it been getting, but still it asketh: "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever." Death is an inexorable, irresistible messenger, who cannot be diverted from executing his orders by the force of the mighty, the bribes of the rich, nor the entreaties of the poor. It doth not reverence the hoary head, nor pity the harmless babe. The bold and daring cannot out-brave it; nor can the faint-hearted obtain a discharge in this war. *Thirdly*, The human body consists of perishing principles: "Dust thou art, and unto dust

shalt thou return." The strongest are but brittle earthen vessels, easily broken in shivers. The soul is but meanly housed while in this mortal body, which is not a house of stone, but a house of clay; "they are crushed before the moth," though this insect be so tender that the gentlest touch of a finger will despatch it: the stone of a raisin, or a hair in milk, having choked men, and laid the house of clay in the dust. If we consider the frame and structure of our bodies, how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; and on how regular and exact a motion of the fluids, and balance of humours, our life depends; and that death has as many doors to enter in by as the body hath pores; and if we compare the soul and body together, we may justly reckon there is somewhat more astonishing in our life than in our death, and that it is more strange to see dust walking up and down on the dust, than lying down in it. *Fourthly*, We have sinful souls, and therefore have dying bodies: death follows sin, as the shadow follows the body. The wicked must die, by virtue of the threatening of the covenant of works: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And the godly must die too: that as death entered by sin, sin may go out by death. Christ has taken away the sting of death as to them; although he has not as yet removed death itself. Wherefore, though it fasten on them, as the viper did on Paul's hand, it shall do them no harm: but because the leprosy of sin is in the walls of the house, it must be broken down, and all the materials thereof carried forth. *Lastly*, Man's life in this world, according to the Scripture account of it, is but a few degrees removed

from death. The Scripture represents it as a vain and empty thing, short in its continuance, and swift in its passing away.

1. Man's life is a vain and empty thing: while it is, it vanisheth away; and lo! it is not: "My days are vanity." If ye suspect afflicted Job of partiality in this matter, hear the wise and prosperous Solomon's character of the days of his life: "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity;" that is, my vain days. Moses, who was a very active man, compares our days to a sleep: "They are as a sleep, which is not noticed till it be ended." The resemblance is striking: few men have right apprehensions of life, until death awaken them; then we begin to know we were living: "We spend our years like a tale that is told." It is as a dream or vision of the night, in which there is nothing solid; when one awakes, all vanisheth: "He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night." It is but a vain show or image: "Surely every man walketh in a vain show."

If we look on our life, in the several periods of it, we will find it a heap of vanities: "Childhood and youth are vanity." We come into the world, the most helpless of all animals: young birds and beasts can do something for themselves, but infant man is altogether unable to help himself. Our childhood is spent in pitiful trifling pleasures, which become the scorn of our own after-thoughts. Youth is a flower that soon withereth, a blossom that quickly falls off: it is a space of time in which we are rash, foolish, and inconsiderate; pleasing ourselves

with a variety of vanities, and swimming as it were through a flood of them. But ere we are aware, it is past, and we are in middle age, encompassed with a thick cloud of cares, through which we must grope; and finding ourselves beset with prickling thorns of difficulties, through them we must force our way, to accomplish the projects and contrivances of our riper thoughts. And the more we solace ourselves in any earthly enjoyment we attain to, the more bitterness do we find in parting with it. Then comes old age, attended with its own train of infirmities, labour and sorrow, and sets us down next door to the grave. In a word, "All flesh is grass." Every stage or period in life is vanity: "Man at his best state is altogether vanity." Death carries off some in the bud of childhood, others in the blossom of youth, and others when they are come to their fruit; few are left standing, till, like ripe corn, they forsake the ground: all die one time or other.

2. Man's life is a short thing: it is not only a vanity, but a short-lived vanity. Consider, first, How the life of man is reckoned in the Scriptures. It was indeed sometimes reckoned by hundreds of years; but no man ever arrived at a thousand, which yet bears no proportion to eternity. Now, hundreds are brought down to scores; threescore and ten, or fourscore, is its utmost length. But few men arrive at that length of life. Yet, as if *years* were too big a word for such a small thing as the life of man on earth, we find it counted by months: "The number of his months are with thee." Our course, like that of the moon, is run in a little time; we are always waxing or waning, till we disappear. But

frequently it is reckoned by days, and these but few :
 “ Man that is born of a woman is of few days.”
 Nay, it is but one day in scripture account, and that a hireling’s day, who will precisely observe when his day ends, and give over his work : “ Till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.” Yea, the Scripture brings it down to the shortest space of time, and calls it a moment : “ Our light affliction (though it last all our life long) is but for a moment.” But elsewhere it is brought down to yet a lower pitch, farther than which one cannot carry it : “ Mine age is as nothing before thee.” Agreeably to this Solomon tells us, “ There is a time to be born, and a time to die ;” but makes no mention of a time to live, as if our life were but a skip from the womb to the grave. Secondly, Consider the various similitudes by which the Scripture represents the shortness of man’s life. Hear Hezekiah : “ Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd’s tent : I have cut off like a weaver my life.” The shepherd’s tent is soon removed ; for the flocks must not feed long in one place : such is a man’s life on this earth, quickly gone. Man is like grass, and like a flower : “ All flesh (even the strongest and most healthy flesh) is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.” The grass is flourishing in the morning, but, in the evening, being cut down by the mowers, it is withered : so man is sometimes walking up and down at ease in the morning, and in the evening is lying a corpse, being knocked down by a sudden stroke with one or other of death’s weapons. Thus is our life liable to a thousand accidents every day, any of which may cut us off. But

though we should escape all these, yet at length this grass withereth, this flower fadeth of itself. It is carried off, "as the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away." It looks big as the morning cloud, which promiseth great things, and raiseth the expectations of the husbandman; but the sun riseth, and the cloud is scattered; death comes, and man vanisheth. The apostle James proposeth the question, "What is your life?" Hear his own answer: "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." It is frail, uncertain, and lasteth not. It is as smoke, which goes out of the chimney as if it would darken the face of the heavens; but quickly is scattered, and appears no more: thus goeth man's life, and where is he? It is a wind: "O remember that my life is wind." It is but a passing blast, "a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again."

Lastly, Man's life is a swift thing; not only a passing, but a flying vanity. Have you not observed how swiftly a shadow hath run along the ground in a cloudy and windy day, suddenly darkening the places beautified before with the beams of the sun, but as suddenly disappearing? Such is the life of man on the earth, for "he flieth as a shadow, and continueth not." A weaver's shuttle is very swift in its motion; in a moment it is thrown from one side of the web to the other: yet our "days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle." How quickly is man tossed through time into eternity! See how Job describes the swiftness of the time of life: "Now my days are swifter than a post; they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift

ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey." He compares his days with a post, a foot-post; a runner, who runs speedily to carry tidings, and will make no stay. But though the post were like Ahimaaz, who overran Cush, our days will be swifter than he; for they flee away, like a man fleeing for his life before the pursuing enemy. Howbeit, that is not all: even he who is fleeing for his life cannot run always; he must needs sometimes stand still, lie down, or turn in somewhere, as Sisera did into Jael's tent, to refresh himself: but our time never halts. Therefore, it is compared to ships which can sail night and day, without intermission, till they be at their port; and to swift ships, ships of desire, in which men quickly arrive at the desired haven; or ships of pleasure, that sail more swiftly than ships of burden. Yet the wind failing, the ship's course is marred: but our time always runs with a rapid course. Therefore it is compared to the eagle flying; not with his ordinary flight, for that is not sufficient to represent the swiftness of our days; but when he flies upon his prey, which is with extraordinary swiftness. And thus, even thus, our days fly away.

Having thus discoursed of death, let us improve it, in discerning the vanity of the world; in bearing up, with Christian contentment and patience, under all troubles and difficulties in it; in mortifying our lusts; in cleaving unto the Lord with purpose of heart, on all hazards; and in preparing for death's approach.

1. Let us hence, as in a looking-glass, behold the vanity of the world, and of all those things in it which men so much value and esteem, and therefore set their hearts upon. The rich and the poor are

equally intent upon this world: they bow the knee to it, yet it is but a clay god: they court this bulky vanity, and run keenly to catch the shadow. The rich man is hugged to death in its embraces; and the poor man wearies himself in the fruitless pursuit. What wonder if the world's smiles overcome us, when we pursue it so eagerly, even while it frowns upon us! But look into the grave, O man! consider and be wise: listen to the doctrine of death, and learn, (1.) That, hold as fast as thou canst, thou shalt be forced to let go thy hold of the world at length. When death comes, thou must bid an eternal farewell to thy enjoyments in this world: thou must leave thy goods to another; and "whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (2.) Thy portion of these things shall be very little ere long. If thou lie down on the grass, and stretch thyself at full length, and observe the print of thy body when thou risest, thou mayest see how much of this earth will fall to thy share at last. It was a mortifying lesson, Saladin, when dying, gave to his soldiers. He called for his standard-bearer, and ordered him to take his winding-sheet upon his pike, and go out to the camp with it, and tell them, that of all his conquests, victories, and triumphs, he had nothing now left him but that piece of linen to wrap his body in for burial. Lastly, This world is a false friend, who leaves a man in time of greatest need, and flees from him when he has most to do. When thou art lying on a death-bed, all thy friends and relations cannot rescue thee; all thy substance cannot ransom thee, nor procure thee a reprieve for one day, nay, not for one hour. Yea, the more thou possessest of this world's goods, thy sorrow at death is like to be the greater.

2. It may serve as a store-house for Christian contentment and patience under worldly losses and crosses. A close application of the doctrine of death is an excellent remedy against fretting, and gives some ease to his rankled heart. When Job had sustained very great losses, he sat down contented, with this meditation: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Look to the house appointed for all living, and learn, (1.) That ye must abide a sorer thrust than the loss of worldly goods. Do not cry out for a thrust in the leg or arm; for ere long there will be a home-thrust at the heart. You may lose your dearest relations: the wife may lose her husband, and the husband his wife; the parents may lose their dear children, and the children their parents. But if any of these trials happen to you, remember you must lose your own life at last; and "wherefore doth a living man complain?" It is always profitable to consider, under affliction, how our case might have been worse than it is. Whatever be consumed, or taken from us, "it is of the Lord's mercies that we (ourselves) are not consumed." (2.) It is but for a short space of time we are to be in this world. It is but little our necessities require in this short space of time: when death comes we will stand in need of none of these things. Why should men rack their heads with cares how to provide for to-morrow, while they know not if they shall need any thing to-morrow? (3.) Ye have matters of greater weight that challenge your care. Death is at the door, beware you

lose not your souls. If blood break out at one part of the body, they use to open a vein in another part of it, to turn the stream of blood, and so to stop it. Thus the Spirit of God sometimes cures men of sorrow for earthly things, by opening the heart-vein to bleed for sin. Did we pursue heavenly things the more vigorously that our affairs in this life prosper not, we should thereby gain a double advantage: our worldly sorrow would be diverted, and our best treasure increased. (4.) Crosses of this nature will not last long. The world's smiles and frowns will quickly be buried together in everlasting forgetfulness. Time flies away with swift wings, and carries our earthly comforts and crosses too along with it: neither of them will accompany us into the house appointed for all living: "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there: and the servant is free from his master." Cast your eyes on eternity, and ye will see affliction here is but for a moment. The truth is, our time here is so very short, that it will not allow either our joys or griefs to come to perfection. Wherefore, let them "that weep, be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not," &c. (5.) Death will put all men on a level. The king and the beggar must dwell in one house when they come to their journey's end, though their entertainment by the way be very different: "The small and the great are there." We are in this world as on a stage: it is no great matter whether a man act the part of a prince or a peasant; for when they have

acted their parts, they must both get behind the curtain, and appear no more. Lastly, If thou be not in Christ, whatever thy afflictions now be, troubles a thousand times worse are abiding thee in another world. Death will turn thy crosses into pure unmixed curses: and then how gladly wouldst thou return to thy former afflicted state, and purchase it at any rate, were there any possibility of such a return! If thou be in Christ, thou mayest well bear thy cross. Death will put an end to all thy troubles. If a man on a journey be not well accommodated where he lodgeth only for a night, he will not trouble himself much about the matter; because he is not to stay there, it is not his home. Ye are on the road to eternity; let it not disquiet you that you meet with some hardships in the inn of this world.

3. It may serve for a bridle to curb all manner of lusts, particularly those conversant about the body. A serious visit made to cold death, and that solitary mansion the grave, might be of good use to repress them.

1st, It may be of use to cause men remit of their inordinate care for the body, which is to many the bane of their souls. Often do these questions, "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" leave no room for another of more importance, namely, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" The soul is put on the rack to answer these mean questions in favour of the body, while its own eternal interests are neglected. But ah! why are men so busy to repair the ruinous cottage, leaving the inhabitant to bleed to death of his wounds, unheeded, unregarded? Why so much care

for the body, to the neglecting of the concerns of the immortal soul? O! be not so anxious for what can only serve your bodies, since, ere long, the clods of cold earth will serve for back and belly too.

2dly, It may abate your pride on account of bodily endowments, which vain man is apt to glory in. Value not yourselves on the blossom of youth; for while ye are in your blooming years ye are but ripening for a grave; and death gives the fatal stroke without asking any body's age. Glory not in your strength; it will quickly be gone: the time will soon be when ye shall not be able to turn yourselves on a bed; and you must be carried by your grieving friends to your long home. And what signifies your healthful constitution? Value not yourselves on your beauty, which "shall consume in the grave." Remember the change death makes on the fairest face: "Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away." Death makes the greatest beauty so loathsome, that it must be buried out of sight. Could a looking-glass be used in the house appointed for all living, it would be a terror to those who now look oftener into their glasses than into their Bibles. And what though the body be gorgeously arrayed? The finest clothes are but badges of our sin and shame, and in a little time will be exchanged for a winding-sheet, when the body will become a feast to the worms.

3dly, It may be a mighty check upon sensuality and fleshly lusts: "I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." It is hard to cause wet wood take fire; and, when the fire doth take hold of it, it is soon extinguished. Sensuality makes men most unfit for

divine communications, and is an effectual means to quench the Spirit. Intemperance in eating and drinking carries on the ruin of soul and body at once, and hastens death, while it makes the man most unmeet for it. Therefore, “take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness—and so that day come upon you unawares.” But O, how often is the soul struck through with a dart in gratifying the senses! At these doors destruction enters in. Therefore Job “made a covenant with his eyes.” “The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.” “Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.” Beware of lasciviousness: study modesty in your apparel, words, and actions. The ravens of the valley of death will at length pick out the wanton eye; the obscene filthy tongue will at length be quiet in the land of silence; and grim death, embracing the body in its cold arms, will effectually allay the heat of all fleshly lusts.

Lastly, In a word, it may check our earthly-mindedness, and at once knock down the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Ah! if we must die, why are we thus? why so fond of temporal things, so anxious to get them, so eager in the embraces of them, so mightily touched with the loss of them? Let me, upon a view of the house appointed for all living, bespeak the worldling in the words of Solomon: “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven.” Riches and all worldly things are but a fair nothing: they are that which is not. They are not

what they seem to be: they are but gilded vanities, that deceive the eye. Comparatively they are not; there is infinitely more of nothingness than of being or reality in the best of them. What is the world, and all that is in it, but a fashion, or fair show, such as men make on a stage, a passing show! Royal pomp is but gaudy show or appearance in God's account. The best name they get is good things; but observe it, they are only the wicked man's good things: "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things," says Abraham in the parable to the rich man in hell. And well may the men of the world call these things their goods; for there is no other good in them, about them, nor attending them. Now, wilt thou set thine eyes upon empty shows and fancies? wilt thou cause thine eyes to fly on them, as the word is? shall men's hearts fly out at their eyes upon them, as a ravenous bird at its prey? "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be?" Forbear thou to behold these things, O mortal! there is no reason thou shouldst set thine eyes upon them.

4. It may serve as a spring of Christian resolution, to cleave to Christ, adhere to his truths, and continue in his ways, whatever we may suffer for so doing. It would much allay the fear of man, that bringeth a snare: "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?" Look on persecutors as pieces of brittle clay, that shall be dashed in pieces: for then shall ye despise them as foes that are mortal, whose terror to others in the land of the living shall quickly die with themselves. The serious consideration of the shortness of our time, and the cer-

tainty of death, will teach us, that all the advantage we can make by our apostacy, in time of trial, is not worth the while; and what we refuse to forego for Christ's sake, may quickly be taken from us by death. But we can never lose it so honourably as for the cause of Christ and his gospel: for what glory is it that ye give up what ye have in the world, when God takes it away from you by death whether you will or not? This consideration may teach us to undervalue life itself, and choose to forego it rather than to sin. And if we refuse to offer it up to God, when he calls for it, in defence of his honour, he can take it from us another way; as it fared with him who would not burn for Christ, but was afterwards burned by an accidental fire in his own house.

Lastly, It may serve for a spur, to incite us to prepare for death. Consider, (1.) Your eternal state will be according to the state in which you die: death will open the doors of heaven or hell to you. As the tree falls, so it shall lie through eternity. If the infant be dead-born, the whole world will not raise it to life again: and if one die out of Christ, in an unregenerate state, there is no more hope of him for ever. (2.) Seriously consider, what it is to go into another world: a world of spirits, wherewith we are very little acquainted. How frightful is converse with spirits to poor mortals in this life! and how dreadful is the case when men are hurried away into another world, not knowing but devils may be their companions for ever! Let us then give all diligence to make and advance our acquaintance with the Lord of that world. (3.) It is but a short time ye have to prepare for death; therefore, now or

never, seeing the time assigned for preparation will soon be over: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." How can we be idle, having so great a work to do, and so little time to do it in? But if the time be short, the work of preparation for death, though hard work, will not last long. The shadows of the evening make the labourer work cheerfully, knowing the time to be at hand when he will be called in from his labour. (4.) Our life in the world is but a short preface to long eternity; and much of the tale is told. O! shall we not double our diligence, when so much of our time is spent, and so little of our great work is done? (5.) The present time is flying away; and we cannot bring back time past, it hath taken an eternal farewell of us: there is no kindling the fire again that is burnt to ashes. The time to come is not ours; and we have no assurance of a share in it when it comes. We have nothing we can call ours but the present moment, and that is flying away: how soon our time may be at an end, we know not. Now the flying shadow of our life allows no time for loitering. The stream of time is the swiftest current, and quickly runs out to eternity. Lastly, If death once carry us off, there is no coming back again to mend our matters: "If a man die, shall he live again?" Dying is a thing we cannot get a trial of; it is what we can only do once: "It is appointed unto men once to die." And that which can be but once done, and yet is of so much importance that our all depends on our doing it right, we have need to use the utmost diligence that

we may do it well. Therefore, prepare for death, and do it timeously.

If ye, who are unregenerate, ask me what ye shall do to prepare for death, that ye may die safely? I answer, I have told you already what must be done. And that is, your nature and state must be changed: ye must be born again; ye must be united to Jesus Christ by faith. And till this is done, ye are not capable of other directions, which belong to one's dying comfortably; whereof we may discourse afterwards in the due place.

HEAD II.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWIXT THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED IN THEIR DEATH.

PROVERBS xiv. 32.

“The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.”

THIS text looks like the cloud betwixt the Israelites and Egyptians, having a dark side towards the latter, and a bright side towards the former.—It represents death, like Pharaoh's jailer, bringing the chief butler and the chief baker out of one prison; the one to be restored to his office, and the other to be led to execution. It shows the difference betwixt the godly and the ungodly in their death; who, as they

act a very different part in life, so, in death, have a vastly different exit.

First, As to the death of a wicked man: here is, 1. The manner of his passing out of the world. He is “driven away,” namely, in his death, as is clear from the opposite clause. He is forcibly thrust out of his place in this world; driven away as chaff before the wind. 2. The state he passeth away in: he dies in a sinful and hopeless state. (1.) In a sinful state: he is “driven away in his wickedness.” He lived in it, and he dies in it; his filthy garments of sin, in which he wrapt up himself in his life, are his prison-garments, in which he shall lie wrapt up for ever. (2.) In a hopeless state; “but the righteous hath hope in his death:” which plainly imports the hopelessness of the wicked in their death. Whereby it is not meant, that no wicked man shall have any hope at all when he is a-dying, but shall die in despair. No: sometimes it is so indeed; but frequently it is otherwise: foolish virgins may, and often do, hope to the last breath. But the wicked man has no solid hope: and as for the delusive hopes he entertains himself with, death will root them up, and he shall be for ever irretrievably miserable.

Secondly, As to the death of a righteous man: he hath hope in his death. This is ushered in with a but—importing a removal of those dreadful circumstances with which the wicked man is attended, who “is driven away in his wickedness; but” the godly are not so. Not so, 1. In the manner of their passing out of the world. The righteous is not driven away as chaff before the wind; but led away as a bride to the marriage-chamber; carried away by the

angels into Abraham's bosom. Not so, 2. As to their own state when passing out of this life. The righteous man dies, (1.) Not in a sinful, but in a holy state. He goes not away in his sin, but out of it. In his life he was putting off the old man, changing his prison-garments; and now the remaining rags of them are removed, and he is adorned with robes of glory. (2.) Not in a hopeless, but a hopeful state. He hath hope in his death: he has the grace of hope, and the well-founded expectation of better things than ever he had in this world; and though the stream of his hope at death may run shallow, yet he has still as much of it as makes him venture his eternal interests upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

DOCTRINE I.—*The wicked dying, are driven away in their wickedness, and in a hopeless state.*

In speaking to this doctrine, I. I shall show how, and in what sense, the wicked are driven away in their wickedness at death. II. I shall discover the hopelessness of their state at death. And, lastly, Apply the whole.

I. How, and in what sense, the wicked are driven away in their wickedness. In discoursing of this matter, I shall briefly inquire, (1.) What is meant by their being driven away. (2.) Whence they shall be driven, and whither. (3.) In what respects they may be said to be driven away in their wickedness. But, before I proceed, let me advertise you, that you are mistaken if you think that no persons are to be called wicked but they who are avowedly vicious and profane; as if the devil could dwell in

none but whose name is *legion*. In Scripture account, all who are not righteous, in the manner hereafter explained, are reckoned wicked. And therefore the text divides the whole world into two sorts, the righteous and the wicked; and ye will see the same thing in that other text, “Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked.” Wherefore, if ye be not righteous, ye are wicked. If ye have not an imputed righteousness, and also an implanted righteousness, or holiness; if ye be yet in your natural state, unregenerate, not united to Christ by faith; howsoever moral and blameless in the eyes of men your conversation may be, ye are the wicked who shall be driven away in their wickedness, if death find you in that state. Now,

First, As to the meaning of this phrase “driven away,” there are three things in it:—The wicked shall be taken away suddenly, violently, and irresistibly.

1. Unrenewed men shall be taken away suddenly at death. Not that all wicked men die suddenly; nor that they are all wicked who die so: God forbid! But, (1.) Death commonly comes upon them unexpected, and so surpriseth them; as the deluge came surprisingly on the old world, though they were forewarned of it long before it came. Death seizeth them, as a creditor doth his debtor to hale him to prison, and that when they are not aware. Death comes in as a thief, at the window, and finds them full of busy thoughts about this life, which that very day perish. (2.) Death always seizeth them unprepared for it. The soul and body are, as it were, hugging one another in mutual embraces;

when death comes like a whirlwind, and separates them. (3.) Death hurries them away in a moment to destruction, and makes a most dismal change: the man, for the most part, never knows where he is, till in hell he lift up his eyes. The floods of wrath suddenly overwhelm his soul; and, ere he is aware, he is plunged in the bottomless pit.

2. The unrenewed man is taken away out of the world violently. Driving is a violent action: he is chased out of the world. Fain would he stay if he could; but death drags him away, like a malefactor, to the execution. He sought no other portion than the profits and pleasures of this world; he hath no other; he really desires no other: how can he then go away out of it, if he were not driven?

Quest. But may not a wicked man be willing to die? *Ans.* He may indeed be willing to die; but, observe, it is only in one of three cases: (1.) In a fit of passion, by reason of some trouble that he is impatient to be rid of. Thus many persons, when their passion has got the better of their reason, and when, on that account, they are most unfit to die, will be ready to cry, ‘O to be gone!’ but should their desire be granted, and death come at their call, they would quickly show they were not in earnest; and that if they go, they must be driven away against their wills. (2.) When they are brimful of despair, they may be willing to die. Thus Saul murdered himself; and Spira wished to be in hell, that he might know the uttermost of what he believed he was to suffer. In this manner men may seek after death, while it flees from them. But fearful is the violence those do undergo, whom the terrors of God do thus drive. (3.) When

they are dreaming of happiness after death. How many are there who can give no Scripture ground for their hope, who yet have no bands in their death ! Many are driven to darkness sleeping : they go off like lambs, who would roar like lions, did they but know what place they are going to.

3. The unregenerate man is taken away irresistibly. He must go, though sore against his will. Death will take no refusal, nor admit of any delay ; though the man has not lived half his days, according to his own computation. Although the physician help, friends groan, the wife and the children cry, and the man himself uses his utmost efforts to retain the spirit, his soul is required of him ; yield he must, and go where he shall never more see light.

Secondly, Let us consider whence they are driven, and whither. When the wicked die, (1.) They are driven out of this world where they sinned, into the other world where they must be judged, and receive their particular sentences : “ It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” They shall no more return to their beloved earth. Though their hearts are wedded to their earthly enjoyments, they must leave them ; they can carry nothing hence. How sorrowful must their departure be, when they have nothing in view so good as that which they leave behind them ! (2.) They are driven out of the society of the saints on earth, into the society of the damned in hell : “ The rich man also died and was buried : and in hell he lifted up his eyes.” What a multitude of the devil’s goats do now take place among Christ’s sheep ! but at

death they shall be “led forth with the workers of iniquity.” There is a mixed multitude in this world, but no mixture in the other: each party is there set by themselves. Though hypocrites grow here as tares among the wheat, death will root them up, and they shall be bound in bundles for the fire. (3.) They are driven out of time into eternity. While time lasts with them, there is hope: but when time goes, all hope goes with it. Precious time is now lavishly spent: it lies so heavy upon the hands of many, that they think themselves obliged to take several ways to drive away time. But beware of being at a loss what to do in life! Improve time for eternity, whilst you have it: for ere long death will drive it from you, and you from it, so as ye shall never meet again. (4.) They are driven out of their specious pretences to piety. Death strips them of the splendid robes of a fair profession, with which some of them are adorned; and turns them off the stage, in the rags of a wicked heart and life. The word *hypocrite* properly signifies a stage-player, who appears to be what indeed he is not. This world is a stage on which these children of the devil personate the children of God. There are none in the other world, who pretend to be better than they really are. Depraved nature acts in the regions of horror, unallayed and undisguised. Lastly, They are driven away from all means of grace: and are set beyond the line, quite out of all prospect of mercy. There is no more an opportunity to buy oil for the lamp: it is gone out at death, and can never be lighted again. There may be offers of mercy and peace made after they are gone; but they are to

others, not to them : there are no such offers in the place to which they are driven ; these offers are only made in that place from which they are driven away.

Lastly, In what respect may they be said to be “driven away in their wickedness?” *Ans.* (1.) In respect of their being driven away in their sinful unconverted state. Having lived enemies to God, they die in a state of enmity to him : for none are brought into the eternal state of consummate happiness, but by the way of the state of grace, or begun recovery in this life. O miserable death, to die in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity ! it had been incomparably better for such as die thus, that they had never been born. (2.) In regard they die sinning, acting wickedly against God, in contradiction to the divine law ; for they can do nothing but sin while they live : so death takes them in the very act of sinning ; violently draws them from the embraces of their lusts, and drives them away to the tribunal to receive their sentence. It is a remarkable expression, “They die in youth :” the marginal reading is, ‘their soul dieth in youth ;’ their lusts being lively, their desires vigorous, and expectations big, as is common in youth. And “their life is among the unclean :” or, and the company (or herd) of them dieth among the Sodomites ; that is, is taken away in the heat of their sin and wickedness, as the Sodomites were. (3.) Inasmuch as they are driven away, loaded with the guilt of all their sins. Their works follow them into the other world ; they go away with the yoke of their transgressions wreathed about their necks. Guilt is a bad companion in life, but how

terrible will it be in death ! It lies now, perhaps, like cold brimstone on their benumbed consciences : but when death opens the way for sparks of divine vengeance, like fire, to fall upon it, it will make dreadful flames in the conscience, in which the soul will be, as it were, wrapt up for ever. Lastly, The wicked are driven away in their wickedness, in so far as they die under the absolute power of their wickedness. While there is hope, there is some restraint on the worst of men : and these moral endowments which God gives to a number of men, for the benefit of mankind in this life, are so many allays and restraints upon the impetuous wickedness of human nature. But all hope being cut off, and these gifts withdrawn, the wickedness of the wicked will then arrive at its perfection. As the seeds of grace sown in the hearts of the elect, come to their full maturity at death ; so wicked and hellish dispositions in the reprobate, come then to their highest pitch. Their prayers to God will then be turned to horrible curses, and their praises to hideous blasphemies : “ There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” This gives a dismal but genuine view of the state of the wicked in another world.

II. I shall discover the hopelessness of the state of unrenewed men at death. It appears to be very hopeless if we consider these four things :—

1. Death cuts off their hopes and prospects of peace and pleasure in this life : “ Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall those things be which thou

hast provided?" They look for great matters in this world, they hope to increase their wealth, to see their families prosper, and to live at ease: but death comes like a stormy wind, and shakes off all their fond hopes, like green fruit from off a tree: "When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him." He may begin a web of contrivances, for advancing his worldly interest; but, before he gets it wrought out, death comes and cuts it off: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish."

2. When death comes, they have no solid grounds to hope for eternal happiness: "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" Whatever hopes they fondly entertain, they are not founded on God's word, which is the only sure ground of hope. If they knew their own case, they would see themselves only happy in a dream. And, indeed, what hope can they have? The law is plain against them, and condemns them. The curses of it (these cords of death) are about them already. The Saviour whom they slighted is now their Judge: and their Judge is their enemy. How then can they hope? They have despised the remedy, and therefore must die without mercy. They have no saving interest in Jesus Christ, the only channel of conveyance in which mercy flows; and therefore they can never taste of it. The sword of justice guards the door of mercy, so as none can enter in but the members of the mystical body of Christ, over whose heads is a covert of atoning blood, the Mediator's blood.

These indeed may pass without harm, for justice has nothing to require of them: but others cannot pass; since they are not in Christ, death comes to them with the sting in it, the sting of unpardoned guilt. It is armed against them with all the force the sanction of a holy law can give it: "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." When that law was given on Sinai, "the whole mount quaked greatly." When the Redeemer was making satisfaction for the elect's breaking of it, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent." What possible ground of hope then is there to the wicked man, when death comes upon him armed with the force of this law! How can he escape that fire which "burnt unto the midst of heaven?" how shall he be able to stand in that smoke that "ascended as the smoke of a furnace?" how will he endure the terrible "thunders and lightnings," and dwell in the "darkness, clouds, and thick darkness?" All these resemblances heaped together, do but faintly represent the fearful tempest of wrath and indignation, which shall pursue the wicked to the lowest hell, and for ever abide on them who are driven to darkness at death.

3. Death roots up their delusive hopes of eternal happiness: then it is their covenant with death and agreement with hell is broken. They are awakened out of their golden dreams, and at length lift up their eyes: "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." They trust all shall be well with them after death: but this their trust is but a web woven out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art and industry. They wrap

themselves up in this their hope, as the spider wraps herself in her web. Death overturns the house built on the sand: it leaves no man under the power of delusion.

Lastly, Death makes their state absolutely and for ever hopeless. Matters cannot be retrieved and amended after death. For, (1.) Time once gone can never be recalled. If cries or tears, price or pains, could bring time back again, the wicked man might have hope in his death. But tears of blood will not prevail; nor will his roaring for millions of ages cause it to return. The sun will not stand still until the sluggard awake, and enter on his journey; and when once it is gone down, he needs not expect the night to be turned into day for his sake: he must lodge through the long night of eternity, where his time left him. (2.) There is no returning to this life, to amend what is amiss: it is a state of probation and trial, which terminates at death; and therefore we cannot return to it again: it is but once we thus live, and once we die. Death carries the wicked man to his own place. This life is our working day: death closeth our day and our work together. We may readily imagine the wicked might have some hope in their death, if, after death has opened their eyes, they could return to life, and have but the trial of one Sabbath, one offer of Christ, one day, or but one hour more, to make up their peace with God: but "man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more; they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." Lastly, In the other world, men have no access to get their ruined state and condition retrieved, if they ever so fain would:

“ For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.” Now a man may flee from the wrath to come; now he may get into a refuge: but when once death has done its work, the door is shut: there are no more offers of mercy, no more pardons: where the tree falls, there it must lie.

Let what has been said be carefully pondered: and, that it may be of use, let me exhort you,

1. To take heed that you entertain no hopes of heaven, but what are built on a solid foundation: tremble to think what fair hopes of happiness death sweeps away like cobwebs; how the hopes of many are cut off, when they seem to themselves to be at the very threshold of heaven; how, in the moment they expected to be carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom, into the regions of bliss and peace, they are carried by devils into the society of the damned in hell, into the place of torment, and regions of horror. I beseech you to beware, (1.) Of a hope built where the ground was never cleared. The wise builder digged deep. Were your hopes of heaven never shaken; but have ye had good hopes all your days? Alas! for it; you may see the mystery of your case explained: “ When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.” But if they have been shaken, take heed lest there have only some breaches been made in the old building, which you have got repaired again by ways of your own. I assure you, your hope (howsoever fair a building it is) is not to trust to; unless your old hopes have been raised, and you have built on a foundation quite new. (2.) Beware of that hope

which looks brisk in the dark, but loseth all its lustre when it is set in the light of God's word, when it is examined and tried by the touchstone of divine revelation: "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." That hope which cannot abide Scripture trial, but sinks when searched into by sacred truth, is a delusion: for God's word is always a friend to the graces of God's Spirit, and an enemy to delusion. (3.) Beware of that hope which stands without being supported by Scripture evidences. Alas! many are big with hopes, who cannot give, because they really have not, any Scripture grounds for them. Thou hopest that all shall be well with thee after death: but what word of God is it on which thou hast "been caused to hope?" what Scripture evidence hast thou to prove that thy hope is not the hope of the hypocrite? what hast thou, after impartial self-examination as in the sight of God, found in thyself, which the word of God determines to be a sure evidence of thy right to eternal life? Numbers of men are ruined with such hopes as stand unsupported by Scripture evidence. Men are fond and tenacious of these hopes: but death will throw them down, and leave the self-deceiver hopeless. Lastly, Beware of that hope of heaven, which doth not prepare and dispose you for heaven, which never makes your soul more holy: "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." The hope of the most part of men is rather a hope to be free of torment in another

life, than a hope of true happiness, the nature whereof is not understood nor discerned; and therefore it stakes down in sloth, and does not excite to mortification and a heavenly life. The glory of the heavenly city does not at all draw their hearts upwards towards it: nor do they lift up their heads with joy, in the prospect of arriving at it. If they had the true hope of the marriage-day, they would, as the bride, "the Lamb's wife," be "making themselves ready for it." But their hopes are produced by their sloth, and their sloth is nourished by their hopes. Oh! as ye would not be driven away hopeless in your death, beware of these hopes: raze them now, and build on a new foundation; lest death leave not one stone of them upon another, and ye never be able to hope any more.

2. Hasten, O sinners, out of your wickedness, out of your sinful state, and out of your wicked life; if ye would not at death be driven away in your wickedness. Remember the fatal end of the wicked man, as the text represents it. I know there is a great difference in the death of the wicked, in respect of some circumstances: but all of them in their death agree in this, that they are "driven away in their wickedness." Some of them die resolutely, as if they scorned to be afraid: some in raging despair, so filled with horror, that they cry out, as if they were already in hell: others in sullen despondency, oppressed with fears, insomuch that their hearts are sunk within them, upon the remembrance of mis-spent time, and the view they have of eternity: having neither head nor heart to do any thing for their own relief. And others die stupid: they lived like

beasts, and they die like beasts, without any concern on their spirits about their eternal state. They groan under their bodily distress, but have no sense of the danger of their souls. To discourse to them, either of the joys of heaven or the torments of hell, is to plough on a rock or beat the air. Some die like the foolish virgins, dreaming of heaven: they are steeled against the fears of hell with presumptuous hopes of heaven. Their business, who would be useful to them, is not to answer doubts about the case of souls, but to dispute them out of their false hopes. But which way soever the unconverted man dies, he is driven away in his wickedness. O dreadful case! O let the consideration of so horrible a departure out of this world, move you to betake yourselves to Jesus Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour, an almighty Redeemer. Let it prevail to drive you out of your wickedness, to holiness of heart and life. Though you reckon it pleasant to live in wickedness, you cannot but own it is bitter to die in it. And if you leave it not in time, you shall go in your wickedness to hell, the proper place of it, that it may be set there on its own base. For when you are passing out of this world, all your sins will hang upon you, accompany you to the other world, and, like so many furies, surround you there for ever.

Lastly, O be concerned for others, especially for your relations, that they may not continue in their sinful natural state, but be brought into a state of salvation; lest they be driven away in their wickedness at death. What would ye not do to prevent any of your friends dying an untimely and violent death? but, alas! do not ye see them in hazard of

being driven away in their wickedness? Is not death approaching them, even the youngest of them? and are they not strangers to true Christianity, remaining in that state in which they came into the world? O! make haste to pluck the brand out of the fire, before it be burnt to ashes. The death of relations often leaves a sting in the hearts of those they leave behind them, for that they did not do for their souls as they had opportunity, and that now the opportunity is for ever taken out of their hands.

DOCTRINE II.—*The state of the godly in death is a hopeful state.*

We have seen the dark side of the cloud looking towards ungodly men passing out of the world; let us now take a view of the bright side of it, shining on the godly as they are entering upon their eternal state. In discoursing of this subject I shall confirm this doctrine, answer an objection against it, and then make some practical improvement of the whole.

For confirmation, let it be observed, That although the passage out of this world by death have a frightful aspect to poor mortals, and to miscarry in it must needs be of fatal consequence; yet the following circumstances make the state of the godly in their death happy and hopeful.

I. They have a trusty good Friend before them in the other world. Jesus Christ, their best friend, is Lord of that land to which death carries them. When Joseph sent for his father to come down to him to Egypt, telling him, “God had made him lord over all Egypt,” and Jacob “saw the waggons Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob

revived:" he frankly resolves to undertake the journey. I think, when the Lord calls a godly man out of this world, he sends him such glad tidings, and such a kind invitation into the other world, that, if he had faith to believe it, his spirit must revive, when he sees the waggon of death which comes to carry him thither. It is true, indeed, he has a weighty trial to undergo—after death, the judgment: but the case of the godly is altogether hopeful; for the Lord of the land is their husband, and their husband is their judge: "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son." And surely the case of the wife is hopeful, when her husband is her judge, even such a husband as hates putting away. No husband is so loving and so tender of his spouse, as the Lord Christ is of his. Moreover, their judge is the advocate: "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And therefore, they need not fear their being put back, and falling into condemnation. What can be more favourable? Can they think, that he who pleads their cause will himself pass sentence against them? Yet further, their Advocate is their Redeemer: they are "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ." So when he pleads for them, he is pleading his own cause. Though an advocate may be careless of the interest of one who employs him, surely he will do his utmost to defend his own right, which he hath purchased with his money: and shall not their Advocate defend the purchase of his own blood? But more than all that, their Redeemer is their head, and they are his members. Is not their case then hopeful in death, who are so closely linked

and allied to the Lord of the other world, who hath the keys of hell and of death?

II. They shall have a safe passage to another world. They must indeed go through “the valley of the shadow of death:” but though it be in itself a dark and shadowy vale, it shall be a valley of hope to them: they shall not be driven through it, but walk through it: as men in perfect safety, who “fear no evil.” Why should they fear? They have the Lord of the land’s safe conduct, his pass sealed with his own blood, namely, the blessed covenant, which is the saint’s death-bed comfort: “Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting COVENANT, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.” Who then can harm them? They have good and honourable attendants—a guard, even a guard of angels. These encamp about them in the time of their life, and surely will not leave them in the day of their death. These happy ministering spirits are attendants on their Lord’s bride, and will doubtless convey her safe home to his house. When friends in mournful mood stand by the saint’s bedside, waiting to see him draw his last breath, his soul is waited for of holy angels, to be carried by them “into Abraham’s bosom.” The Captain of the saints’ salvation is the captain of this holy guard: he was their guide even unto death, and he will be their guide through it too: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.” They may without fear pass that river, being confident it shall not overflow them;

and may walk through that fire, being sure they shall not be burnt by it.

Death can do them no harm. It cannot even hurt their bodies: for though it separate the soul from the body, it cannot separate the body from the Lord Christ. Even death is to them but a sleep in Jesus. They continue members of Christ, though in a grave. Their dust is precious dust, laid up in the grave, as in their Lord's cabinet. Even the dead bodies of the saints are valued by their Saviour: they are "sown in corruption, to be raised in incorruption: sown in dishonour, to be raised in glory." It cannot hurt their souls. It is with the souls of the saints at death, as with Paul and his company in their voyage. The ship was broken in pieces, but the passengers got all safe to land. When the dying saint's speech is laid, his eyes set, and his last breath drawn, the soul gets safe away into the heavenly paradise, leaving the body to return to its earth, but in the joyful hope of a re-union at its glorious resurrection. How can death hurt the godly? it is a foiled enemy: if it cast them down, it is only that they may rise up more glorious, "Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death." The soul and life of it is gone: it may fright, but cannot hurt saints: it is only the shadow of death to them, it is not the thing itself: their dying is but as dying, or somewhat like dying. The apostle tells us, "It is Christ that died." Stephen, the first Christian martyr, though stoned to death, yet but fell asleep. Certainly the nature of death is quite changed with respect to the saints. It comes to the godly without its sting: they may meet it with that salutation,

“ O death, where is thy sting ? ” Is this Marah ? Is this bitter death ? “ The sting of death is sin,” but that is taken away. If death arrest the saint, and carry him before the Judge, to answer for the debt he contracted, the debt will be found paid by the glorious Cautioner ; and he has the discharge to show. It is true, it is a great journey to go through the valley of the shadow of death ; but the saint’s burden is taken away, his iniquity is pardoned, he may walk at ease : the redeemed may walk at leisure there, free from all apprehensions of danger.

Lastly, They shall have a joyful entrance into the other world. Their arrival in the regions of bliss will be celebrated with rapturous hymns of praise to their glorious Redeemer. A dying day is a good day to a godly man. Yea, it is his best day ; it is better to him than his birth-day, or than the most joyous day he ever had on earth : “ A good name,” says the wise man, “ is better than precious ointment : and the day of death than the day of one’s birth.” O ! what solid joy and consolation may they have who are true Christians, being in Christ, who “ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel ! ” Death is one of those “ all things ” that “ work together for good to them that love God.” When the body dies, the soul is perfected : the body of death goes off, at the death of the body. What harm did the jailer to Pharaoh’s butler, when he opened the prison-door to him and let him out ? Thus, and no worse, are the souls of the saints treated by death. It comes to the godly man, as Haman came to Mordecai with the royal apparel and the horse. He whom the king delighted

to honour, behooved to be honoured; and Haman, Mordecai's grand enemy, must be the man employed to put this honour upon him. Glory, glory, glory, blessing and praise to our Redeemer, our Saviour, our Mediator! by whose death, grim, devouring death is made to do such a good office to those whom it might otherwise have hurried away in their wickedness, to utter and eternal destruction. A dying day is, in itself, a joyful day to the godly: it is their redemption day; when the captives are delivered, when the prisoners are set free. It is the day of the pilgrims coming home from their pilgrimage: the day in which the heirs of glory return from their travels to their own country, and their Father's house, and enter into actual possession of the glorious inheritance. It is their marriage-day: now is the time of espousals; but then the marriage is consummated, and a marriage-feast begun which has no period. If so, is not the state of the godly in death a hopeful state?

Object. But if the state of the godly in their death be so hopeful, how comes it to pass that many of them, when dying, are full of fears, and have little hope? *Ans.* It must be owned, that saints do not all die in one and the same manner; there is a diversity among them, as well as among the wicked; yet the worst case of a dying saint is indeed a hopeful one. Some die triumphantly, in a full assurance of faith: "The time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." They get a taste of the joys of heaven while here on earth;

and begin the songs of Zion while yet in a strange land. Others die in a solid fiducial dependence on their Lord and Saviour: though they cannot sing triumphantly, yet they can and will say confidently, "The Lord is their God." Though they cannot triumph over death, with old Simeon, having Christ in his arms, and saying, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation:" yet they can say, with dying Jacob, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." His left hand is under their head to support them, though his right hand doth not embrace them: they firmly believe, though they are not filled with joy in believing. They can plead the covenant, and hang by the promise, although their house is not so with God as they could wish. But the dying day of some saints may be like that day mentioned, Zech. xiv. 7. "Not day, nor night." They may die under great doubts and fears; setting, as it were, in a cloud, and going to heaven in a mist. They may go mourning without the sun, and never put off their spirit of heaviness till death strip them of it. They may be pursued by the devouring lion, even to the very gates of the New Jerusalem: "If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." There is safety amidst their fears, but danger in the wicked's strong confidence; and there is a blessed seed of gladness in their greatest sorrows: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

Now, saints are liable to such perplexity in their death, because, though they be Christians indeed,

yet they are men of like passions with others; and death is a frightful object in itself, whatever dress it appears in: the stern countenance with which it looks at mortals, can hardly miss of causing them shrink. Moreover, the saints are of all men the most jealous of themselves. They think of eternity, and of a tribunal, more deeply than others do: with them, it is a more serious thing to die than the rest of mankind are aware of. They know the deceits of the heart, the subtilties of depraved human nature, better than others do, and therefore they may have much ado to keep up hope on a death-bed; while others pass off quietly, like sheep to the slaughter: the rather that Satan, who useth all his art to support the hopes of the hypocrite, will do his utmost to mar the peace and increase the fears of the saint. Finally, The bad frame of spirit, and ill condition, in which death sometimes seizeth a true Christian, may cause this perplexity. By his being in the state of grace, he is indeed always habitually prepared for death, and his dying safely is insured: but there is more requisite to his actual preparation, and dying comfortably; his spirit must be in good condition too.

Wherefore there are three cases, in which death cannot but be very uncomfortable to a child of God: (1.) If it seize him at a time when the guilt of some particular sin unrepented of is lying on his conscience; and death comes, on that very account, to take him out of the land of the living; as was the case of many of the Corinthian believers: "For this cause, (namely, of unworthy communicating,) many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." If

a person is surprised with the approach of death, while lying under the guilt of some unpardoned sin, it cannot but cause a mighty consternation. (2.) When death catchès him sleeping. The midnight cry must be frightful to sleeping virgins. When a Christian has been going on in a course of security and backsliding, and awakens not till death comes to his bedside, it is no marvel if he get a fearful awakening. Lastly, When he has lost sight of his saving interest in Christ, and cannot produce evidences of his title to heaven. It is hard to meet with death without some evidence of a title to eternal life at hand; hard to go through the dark valley without the candle of the Lord shining upon the head. It is a terrible adventure to launch out into eternity, when a man can make no better of it than a leap in the dark, not knowing where he shall light, whether in heaven or hell.

Nevertheless, the state of the saints, in their death, is always in itself hopeful. The presumptuous hopes of the ungodly, in their death, cannot make their state hopeful; neither can the hopelessness of a saint make his state hopeless: for God judgeth according to the truth of the thing, not according to men's opinions about it. Howbeit, the saints can no more be altogether without hope than they can be altogether without faith. Their faith may be very weak, but it fails not; and their hope very low, yet they will, and do hope to the end. Even while the godly seem to be carried away with the stream of doubts and fears, there remains still as much hope as determines them to lay hold on the tree of life that grows on the banks of the river: "Then I said,

I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."

USE.—This speaks comfort to the godly against the fear of death. A godly man may be called a happy man before his death; because, whatever befall him in life, he shall certainly be happy at death. You who are in Christ, who are true Christians, have hope in your end; and such a hope as may comfort you against all those fears which arise from the consideration of a dying hour. This I shall branch out in answering some cases briefly.

Case 1. The prospect of death (will some of the saints say) is uneasy to me, not knowing what shall become of my family when I am gone. *Ans.* "The righteous hath hope in his death," as to his family as well as himself. Although you have little for the present to live upon, which has been the case of many of God's chosen ones: "We (namely the apostles,) both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place:" and though you have nothing to leave them, as was the case of that son of the prophet who did fear the Lord; yet you have a good friend to leave them to—a covenanted God, to whom you may confidently commit them: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." The world can bear witness of signal settlements made upon the children of providence, such as by their pious parents have been cast upon God's providential care. It has been often remarked, that they wanted neither provision nor education. Moses is an eminent instance of this. He, although he was an outcast infant, yet was "learned in all the wis-

dom of the Egyptians," and became king in Jeshurun. O! may we not be ashamed that we do not securely trust him with the concerns of our families, to whom, as our Saviour and Redeemer, we have committed our eternal interest?

Case 2. Death will take us away from our dear friends: yea, we shall not see the Lord in the land of the living, in the blessed ordinances. *Ans.* It will take you to your best friend, the Lord Christ. And the friends you leave behind you, if they be indeed persons of worth, you will meet them again when they come to heaven: and you will never be separated any more. If death take you away from the temple below, it will carry you to the temple above. It will indeed take you from the streams, but it will set you down by the fountain. If it put out your candle, it will carry you where there is no night, where there is an eternal day.

Case 3. I have so much ado in time of health, to satisfy myself as to my interest in Christ, about my being a real Christian, a regenerate man, that I judge it is almost impossible I should die comfortably. *Ans.* If it is thus with you, then double your diligence "to make your calling and election sure." Endeavour to grow in knowledge, and walk closely with God; be diligent in self-examination, and pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit, whereby you may know the things freely given you of God. If you are enabled by the power and Spirit of Christ thus diligently to prosecute your spiritual concerns, though the time of your life be neither day nor night, yet at evening time it may be light. Many weak Christians indulge doubts and fears about their spiritual

state, as if they placed at least some part of religion in this imprudent practice: but, towards the period of life, they are forced to think and act in another manner. Some Christians, who perplex themselves much throughout the course of their lives with jealous doubts and fears, content themselves, when they come to die, with such evidences of the safety of their state as they could not be satisfied with before; and by disputing less against themselves, and believing more, court the peace they formerly rejected, and gain it too.

Case 4. I am under a sad decay in respect of my spiritual condition. *Ans.* Bodily consumptions may make death easy, but it is not so in spiritual decays. I will not say, that a godly man cannot be in such a case when he dies; but I believe it is rarely so. Ordinarily, I suppose, a cry comes to awaken sleepy virgins before death come. David and Solomon fell under great spiritual decays; but, before they died, they recovered their spiritual strength and vigour. However, bestir ye yourselves, without delay, to strengthen the things that remain: your fright will be the less, that ye awake from spiritual sleep ere death come to your bedside: and you ought to lose no time, seeing you know not how soon death may seize you.

Case 5. It is terrible to think of the other world, that world of spirits which I have so little acquaintance with. *Ans.* Thy best friend is Lord of that other world. Abraham's bosom is kindly, even to those who never saw his face. After death, thy soul becomes capable of converse with the blessed inhabitants of the other world. The spirits of just

men made perfect, were once such as thy spirit now is. And as for the angels, howsoever they be of a superior nature in the rank of beings, yet our nature is dignified above theirs in the man Christ; and they are all of them thy Lord's servants, and so thy fellow-servants.

Case 6. The pangs of death are terrible. *Ans.* Yet not so terrible as pangs of conscience, caused by a piercing sense of guilt, and apprehensions of divine wrath, with which I suppose thee to be not altogether unacquainted. But who would not endure bodily sickness, that the soul may become sound and every whit whole? The pains of death will not last long; and the Lord thy God will not leave, but support thee under them.

Case 7. But I am like to be cut off in the midst of my days. *Ans.* Do not complain, you will be the sooner at home: you thereby have the advantage of your fellow-labourers, who were at work before you in the vineyard. God, in the course of his providence, hides some of his saints early in the grave, that they may be taken away from the evil to come. An early removal out of this world prevents much sin and misery: and they have no ground of complaint who get the residue of their years in Emmanuel's land. Surely thou shalt live as long as thou hast work cut out for thee by the great Master, to be done for him in this world; and when that is at an end, it is high time to be gone.

Case 8. I am afraid of sudden death. *Ans.* Thou mayest indeed die so. Good Eli died suddenly. Yet death found him watching: "Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour the Lord doth

come." But be not afraid: it is an inexpressible comfort, that death, come when it will, can never catch thee out of Christ; and therefore can never seize thee, as a jailer, to hurry thee into the prison of hell. Sudden death may hasten and facilitate thy passage to heaven, but can do thee no prejudice.

Case 9. I am afraid it be my lot to die wanting the exercise of reason. *Ans.* I make no question but a child of God, a true Christian, may die in this case. But what harm? There is no hazard in it as to his eternal state: a disease, at death, may divest him of his reason, but not of his religion. When a man, going a long voyage, has put his affairs in order, and put all his goods aboard, he himself may be carried aboard the ship sleeping: all is safe with him, although he knows not where he is till he awaken in the ship. Even so the godly man who dies in this case, may die uncomfortably, but not unsafely.

Case last. I am naturally timorous, and the very thoughts of death are terrible to me. *Ans.* The less you think on death, the thoughts of it will be the more frightful: but make it familiar to you by frequent meditations upon it, and you may thereby allay your fears. Look at the white and bright side of the cloud: take faith's view of the city that hath foundations, so shall you see hope in your death. Be duly affected with the body of sin and death, the frequent interruptions of your communion with God, and with the glory which dwells on the other side death: this will contribute much to remove slavish fear.

It is pity saints should be so fond of life as they

often are: they ought to be always on good terms with death. When matters are duly considered, it might well be expected every child of God, every regenerate man, should generously profess, concerning this life, what Job did, "I loathe it, I would not live always." In order to gain their hearts to this desirable temper, I offer the following additional considerations:—

1. Consider the sinfulness that attends life in this world. While ye live here, ye sin, and see others sinning. Ye breathe infectious air. Is it at all strange to loathe such a life? (1.) Doth not the sin of your nature make you groan daily? Are you not sensible, that though the cure be begun, it is yet far from being perfected? Has not the leprosy got into the walls of the house, which cannot be removed without pulling it down? Is not your nature so vitiated, that no less than the separation of the soul from the body can root out the disease? Are not all your actions tainted and blemished with defects and imperfections? Who else then should be much in love with life, but such whose sickness is their health, and who glory in their shame? (2.) The follies and wickedness of men are every where conspicuous, and make but an unpleasant scene. This sinful world is but an unsightly company, a disagreeable crowd, in which the most loathsome are the most numerous. (3.) Are not your own sores oftentimes breaking out again after healing? Frequent relapses may well cause us remit of our fondness for this life. Do ye never wish for cold death, thereby effectually to cool the heat of those lusts, which so often take fire again, even after a flood of

godly sorrow has gone over them? (4.) Do not ye sometimes infect others, and others infect you? There is no society in the world, in which every member of it doth not sometimes lay a stumbling-block before the rest. The best carry about with them the tinder of a corrupt nature, which they cannot be rid of while they live, and which is liable to be kindled at all times, and in all places: yea, they are apt to inflame others, and become the occasion of sinning. Certainly these things are apt to imbitter this life to the saints.

2. Consider the misery and troubles that attend it. Rest is desirable, but it is not to be found on this side of the grave. Worldly troubles attend all men in this life. This world is a sea of trouble, where one wave rolls upon another. They who fancy themselves beyond the reach of trouble, are mistaken: no state, no stage of life, is exempted from it. The crowned head is surrounded with thorny cares. Honour many times paves the way to deep disgrace: riches, for the most part, are kept to the hurt of the owners. The fairest rose wants not prickles; and the heaviest cross is sometimes found wrapt up in the greatest earthly comfort. Spiritual troubles attend the saints in this life. They are like travellers, travelling in a cloudy night, in which the moon sometimes breaks out from under one cloud, but quickly hides her head again under another. The sudden alterations the best frame of spirit is liable to, the perplexing doubts, confounding tears, short-lived joys, and long-running sorrows, which have a certain affinity with the present life, must needs create in the saints a desire to be with Christ, which is best of all.

Lastly, Consider the great imperfections attending this life. While the soul is lodged in this cottage of clay, the necessities of the body are many; it is always craving. Eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like, are in themselves but mean employment for a rational creature; and will be reputed such by the heaven-born soul. They are badges of imperfection, and as such unpleasant to the mind aspiring to that life and immortality which is brought to light through the gospel; and would be very grievous, if this state of things were of long continuance. Doth not the gracious soul often find itself yoked with the body, as with a companion in travel, unable to keep pace with it? When the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. When the soul would mount upward, the body is a clog on it, and as a stone tied to the foot of a bird attempting to fly. The truth is, O believer! thy soul in this body is, at best, but like a diamond in a ring, where much of it is obscured; it is far sunk in the vile clay, till relieved by death.

I conclude this subject with a few directions how to prepare for death, so as we may die comfortably. I speak not here of habitual preparation for death, which a true Christian, in virtue of his gracious state, never wants, from the time he is born again and united to Christ; but of actual preparation or readiness, in respect of his circumstantiate case, frame, and disposition of mind and spirit; the want of which makes even a saint very unfit to die.

First, Let it be your constant care to keep a clean conscience, "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man." Beware of a standing con-

troversy betwixt God and you, on the account of some iniquity regarded in the heart. Guilt lying on the conscience is a fountain of fears; and will readily sting severely, when death stares the criminal in the face. Hence it is, that many, even of God's children, when a-dying, are made to wish passionately, and desire eagerly, that they may live to do what they ought to have done before that time. Wherefore, walk closely with God; be diligent, strict and exact in your course; beware of a loose, careless, and irregular conversation; as ye would not lay up for yourselves anguish and bitterness of spirit in a dying hour. And because, through the infirmity cleaving to us in our present state of imperfection, in many things we offend all, renew your repentance daily, and be ever washing in the Redeemer's blood. As long as ye are in the world, ye will need to wash your feet, that is, to make application of the blood of Christ anew, for purging your consciences from the guilt of daily miscarriages. Let death find you at the fountain; and if so, it will find you ready to answer its call.

Secondly, Be always watchful, waiting for your change, "Like unto men that wait for their lord—that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Beware of slumbering and sleeping, while the Bridegroom tarries. To be awakened out of a spiritual slumber, by a surprising call to pass into another world, is a very frightful thing: but he who is daily waiting for the coming of his Lord, shall comfortably receive the grim messenger, while he beholds him ushering in Him of whom he may confidently say, "This is my

God, and I have waited for him." The way to die comfortably, is to die daily. Be often essaying, as it were, to die. Bring yourselves familiarly acquainted with death, by making many visits to the grave in serious meditations upon it. This was Job's practice: "I have made my bed in the darkness." Go thou, and do likewise: and when death comes, thou shalt have nothing ado but to lie down. "I have said to corruption, thou art my father: to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister." Do thou say so too, and thou wilt be the fitter to go home to their house. Be frequently reflecting upon your conduct, and considering what course of life you wish to be found in when death arrests you, and act accordingly. When you do the duties of your station in life, or are employed in acts of worship, think with yourselves, that, it may be, this is the last opportunity; and therefore act as if you were never to do more of that kind. When you lie down at night, compose your spirits as if you were not to awake till the heavens be no more. And when you awake in the morning, consider that new day as your last, and live accordingly. Surely that night cometh, of which you will never see the morning; or that morning of which you will never see the night: but which of your mornings or nights will be such, you know not.

Thirdly, Employ yourselves much in weaning your hearts from the world. The man who is making ready to go abroad, busies himself in taking leave of his friends. Let the mantle of earthly enjoyments hang loose about you, that it may be easily dropped when death comes to carry you away into

another world. Moderate your affections towards your lawful comforts of life; and let not your hearts be too much taken with them. Feed with fear, and walk through the world as pilgrims and strangers. Like as when the corn is forsaking the ground, it is ready for the sickle; when the fruit is ripe, it falls off the tree easily: so when a Christian's heart is truly weaned from the world, he is prepared for death, and it will be the more easy to him. A heart disengaged from the world is a heavenly one; and then we are ready for heaven when our heart is there before us.

Fourthly, Be diligent in gathering and laying up evidences of your title to heaven, for your support and comfort at the hour of death. The neglect hereof mars the joy and consolation which some Christians might otherwise have at their death. Wherefore, examine yourselves frequently as to your spiritual state; that evidences, which lie hid and unobserved, may be brought to light and taken notice of. And if you would manage this work successfully, make solemn serious work of it. Set apart some time for it. And after earnest prayer to God, through Jesus Christ, for the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit, whereby ye may be enabled to understand his own word, to discern his own work in your souls; sist yourselves before the tribunal of your consciences, that ye may judge yourselves in this weighty matter.

And in the first place, Let the marks of a regenerate state be fixed from the Lord's word; and have recourse to some particular text to that purpose, such as "I love them that love me." "If any man

come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." "I was also upright before him; and I kept myself from mine iniquity." "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind." "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "For we are the circumcision, which worship (or serve) God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." The sum of the evidence arising from these texts lies here:—A real Christian is one who loves God for himself, as well as for his benefits; and that with a supreme love, above all persons and all things: he has an awful and impartial regard to God's commands: he opposeth and wrestleth against that sin, which of all others most easily besets him: he approveth and loveth the holy law, even in that very point wherein it strikes against his most beloved lust: his hope of heaven engageth him in the study of universal holiness; in the which he aims at perfection, though he cannot reach it in this life: he serves the Lord not only in acts of worship, but in the whole of his conversation; and as to both, is spiritual in the principle, motives, aims, and ends of his service: yet he sees nothing in himself to trust to before the Lord: Christ and his fullness is the stay of his soul: and his confidence is cut off from all that is not Christ, or in Christ, in point

of justification or acceptance with God, and in point of sanctification too. Every one in whom these characters are found, has a title to heaven, according to the word. It is convenient and profitable to mark such texts for this special use, as they occur while you read the Scriptures, or hear sermons. The marks of a regenerate state thus fixed, in the next place, impartially search and try your own hearts thereby, as in the sight of God, with dependence on him for spiritual discerning, that ye may know whether they be in you or not. And when you find them, form the conclusion deliberately and distinctly; namely, that therefore you are regenerate, and have a title to heaven. Thus you may gather evidences. But be sure to have recourse to God in Christ by earnest prayer for the testimony of the Spirit, whose office it is to bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Moreover, carefully observe the course and method of providence towards you; and likewise how your soul is affected under the same, in the various steps thereof: compare both with Scripture doctrines, promises, threatenings, and examples; so shall ye perceive if the Lord deals with you as he used to do unto those that love his name: and if you be going forth by the footsteps of the flock, this may afford you comfortable evidence. Walk tenderly and circumspectly, and the Lord will manifest himself to you according to his promise: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." But it is vain to think of successful self-examination, if ye be loose and irregular in your conversation.

Lastly, Despatch the work of your day and generation with speed and diligence. “David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep.” God has allotted us certain pieces of work of this kind, which ought to be despatched before the time of working be over: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.” “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Reflection, in a dying hour, upon neglected seasons and lost opportunities, cannot fail to disquiet a Christian. Wherefore, whatever is incumbent upon thee to do for God’s honour and the good of others, either as the duty of thy station, or by special opportunity put into thy hand, perform it seasonably, if thou wouldst die comfortably.

HEAD III.

THE RESURRECTION.

JOHN V. 28, 29.

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

THESE words are part of the defence our Lord Jesus Christ makes for himself, when persecuted by

the Jews for curing the impotent man, and ordering him to carry away his bed on the Sabbath; and for vindicating his conduct, when accused by them of having thereby profaned that day. On this occasion he professed himself, not only Lord of the Sabbath, but also Lord of life and death; declaring, in the words of the text, the resurrection of the dead to be brought to pass by his power. This he introduceth with these words, as with a solemn preface: “Marvel not at this,” that is, at this strange discourse of mine: do not wonder to hear me, whose appearance is so very mean in your eyes, talk at this rate; for the day is coming in which the dead shall be raised by my power.

Observe in this text, (1.) The doctrine of the resurrection asserted: “All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.” The dead bodies, which are reduced to dust, shall revive, and evidence life by hearing and moving. (2.) The author of it, Jesus Christ the Son of man: the dead shall hear his voice, and be raised thereby. (3.) The number that shall be raised: “all that are in the graves,” that is, all the dead bodies of men, good and bad, (4.) The great distinction that shall be made betwixt the godly and the wicked. They shall indeed both rise again in the resurrection. None of the godly shall be missing, and all the wicked shall come forth: their vaulted tombs shall hold them no longer than the voice is uttered. But the former shall have a joyful resurrection to life, whilst the latter have a dreadful resurrection to damnation. Lastly, The set time of this great event: there is an hour, or certain fixed period of time, appointed of God for it. We are

not told when that hour will be, but that it is coming; for this, among other reasons, that we may always be ready.

DOCTRINE—*There shall be a resurrection of the dead.*

In discoursing of this subject, I. I shall show the certainty of the resurrection. II. I shall inquire into the nature of it. And, lastly, make some practical improvement of the whole.

I. In showing the certainty of the resurrection, I shall evince, (1.) That God can raise the dead. And, (2.) That he will do it;—which are the two grounds or topics laid down by Christ himself, when disputing with the Sadducees: “Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.”

First, Seeing God is Almighty, surely he can raise the dead. We have instances of this powerful work of God both in the Old and New Testament. The son of the widow in Sarepta was raised from the dead, the Shunamite’s son, and the man cast into the sepulchre of Elisha. In the New Testament, Jairus’ daughter, and Dorcas, were both raised to life, when lately dead; the widow’s son in Nain, when they were carrying him out to bury him; and Lazarus, when stinking in the grave.

Can men make curious glasses out of ashes, reduce flowers into ashes, and raise them again out of these ashes, restoring them to their former beauty; and cannot the great Creator, who made all things of nothing, raise man’s body, after it is reduced into dust? If it be objected, ‘How can men’s bodies be

raised up again after they are resolved into the dust, and the ashes of many generations are mingled together?' Scripture and reason furnish the answer: 'With men it is impossible, but not with God.' It is absurd for men to deny that God can do a thing, because they see not how it may be done. How small a portion do we know of his ways, how absolutely incapable are we of conceiving distinctly of the extent of almighty power, and much more of comprehending its actings, and the method of its procedure! I question not but many illiterate men are as great infidels to many chemical experiments, as some learned men are to the doctrine of the resurrection: and as these last are ready to deride the former, so the Lord will have them in derision. Shall some men do such things as are wonders in the eyes of others, because they cannot comprehend them; and shall men confine the infinite power of God within the narrow boundaries of their own shallow capacities, in a matter nowise contrary to reason? An inferior nature has but a very imperfect conception of the power of a superior. Brutes do not conceive of the actings of reason in men; and men have but lame notions of the power of angels: how low and inadequate a conception, then, must a finite nature have of the power of that which is infinite! Though we cannot conceive how God acts, yet we ought to believe he can do above what we can think or conceive of. Let our modern Sadducees propose the question, as the ancient Sadducees did in the case of the woman, who had been married to seven husbands successively. We answer, as our blessed Lord and Saviour did: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the

power of God.” We believe God to be omniscient and omnipotent; infinite in knowledge and in power: and hence, agreeably to the dictates of reason, we conclude the possibility of the resurrection.

Material things may change their forms and shapes, may be resolved into the principles of which they are formed; but they are not annihilated, or reduced to nothing: nor can they be so by any created power. God is omniscient, his understanding is infinite; therefore he knows all things whatsoever: what they were at any time, what they are, and where they are to be found.

Now, to this infinite understanding join infinite power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself; and this gloriously great work appears most reasonable. If omniscience discover every little particle of dust, where it is, and how it is to be matched; cannot omnipotence bring them and join them together in their order? Did he speak this world into being, out of nothing; and can he not form man’s body out of its pre-existent matter? If he calleth these things which be not, as though they were; surely he can call things that are dissolved, to be as they were, before the compound was resolved into its parts and principles: wherefore, God can raise the dead. And “why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”

Secondly, God will do it. He not only can do it, but he certainly will do it, because he hath said it. Our text is very full to this purpose: “All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrec-

tion of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." These words relate to, and are an explanation of that part of Daniel's prophecy, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The which appears to have been calculated to confront the doctrine of the Sadducees; which the Holy Ghost knew was to be at a great height in the Jewish church, under the persecution of Antiochus. There are many other texts in the Old and New Testaments that might here be adduced: "And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." But I need not multiply testimonies, in a matter so clearly and frequently taught in sacred Scripture. Our Lord and Saviour himself proves it against the Sadducees, in that remarkable text: "Now, that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; for he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." These holy patriarchs were now dead; nevertheless, the Lord Jehovah is called their God; namely, in virtue of the covenant of grace, and in the sense thereof: in which sense, the phrase comprehends all blessedness, as that which by the covenant is secured to them who are in it: "God is not ashamed to be

called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." He is not called the God of their souls only; but their God, the God of their persons, souls and bodies: the which, by virtue of his truth and faithfulness, must have its full effect. Now, it cannot have its full effect on the dead, who, in as far as they are dead, are far from all blessedness; but on the living, who alone are capable of it: therefore, since God is still called their God, they are living in respect of God, although their bodies are yet in the grave. The apostle Paul proves the resurrection at large, 1 Cor. xv. and shows it to be a fundamental article, the denial whereof is subversive of Christianity: "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

II. I shall inquire into the nature of the resurrection; showing, 1. Who shall be raised; 2. What shall be raised; 3. How the dead shall be raised.

1. Who shall be raised? Our text tells us who they are; namely, "All that are in the graves;" that is, all mankind who are dead. As for those persons who shall be found alive at the second coming of Christ, they shall not die, and soon thereafter be raised again; but such a change shall suddenly pass upon them, as shall be to them instead of dying and rising again, so that their bodies shall become like to those bodies which are raised out of the graves: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Hence those who are to be judged at the great day, are distinguished into quick and dead. All the dead shall arise, whether godly or wicked, just or unjust:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.”

2. What shall be raised? The bodies of mankind. A man is said to die when the soul is separated from the body, and returns unto God who gave it. But it is the body only which is laid in the grave, and can be properly said to be raised: wherefore the resurrection is, strictly speaking, competent to the body only. Moreover, it is the same body that dies which shall rise again. The very notion of a resurrection implies this; since nothing can be said to rise again but that which falls. But to illustrate it a little, (1.) It is plain from Scripture testimony. The apostle tells, it is this mortal which must put on immortality; and that Christ “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” (2.) The equity of the divine procedure, both with respect to the godly and the wicked, evinces this. It is not reckoned equal among men, that one do the work and another get the reward. Though the glorifying of the bodies of the saints is not, properly speaking, and in a strict sense, the reward of their services or sufferings on earth; yet this is evident, that it is not at all agreeable to the manner of the divine dispensation, that one body serve him, and another be glorified; that one fight, and another receive the crown. How can it be imagined that the temples of the Holy Ghost, (as these bodies of believers are termed,) should always lie in rubbish, and others be reared up in their stead? that these members of Christ shall perish utterly, and other bodies come in their room? Nay, surely, as these bodies of the saints now bear a part

in glorifying God, and some of them suffer in his cause ; so they shall partake of the glory that is to be revealed. And those bodies of the wicked, which are laid in the dust, shall be raised again ; that the same body, which sinned, may suffer. Shall one body sin here, and another suffer in hell for that sin ? shall that body, which was the soul's companion in sin, lie for ever hid in the dust ; and another body, which did not act any part in sinning, be its companion in torment ? No, no ; it is that body which now takes up all their thoughts to provide for its back and belly, that shall be raised up to suffer in hell. It is that tongue that is now the swearing, lying tongue, which will need water to cool it in eternal flames. These same feet, that now stand in the way of sinners, and carry men in their ungodly courses, shall stand in the burning lake. And these now covetous and lascivious eyes shall take part in the fire and smoke of the pit.

3. How shall the dead be raised ? The same Jesus, who was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, shall, at the last day, to the conviction of all, be declared both Lord and Christ ; appearing as Judge of the world, attended with his mighty angels, he shall “ descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” “ The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised,” and those who are alive changed. There is no question but this coming of the Judge of the world will be in greater majesty and terror than we can conceive : yet that awful grandeur, majesty, and state, which was displayed at the giving of the law ; namely, thunders heard, lightnings and a

thick cloud upon the mount seen, the Lord descending in fire, the whole mount quaking greatly, and the voice of the trumpet waxing louder and louder, may help forward a becoming thought of it. However, the sound of this trumpet shall be heard all the world over; it shall reach to the depths of the sea, and into the bowels of the earth. And, at this alarming voice, shall every soul come again into its own body, never more to be separated. The dead can stay no longer in their graves, but must bid an eternal farewell to their long homes: they hear his voice, and must come forth and receive their final sentence.

Now, as there is a great difference betwixt the godly and the wicked in their life and in their death, so will there be also in their resurrection.

The godly shall be raised up out of their graves, by virtue of the Spirit of Christ, the blessed bond of their union with him: "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Jesus Christ arose from the dead as the first-fruits of them that slept. So they that are Christ's shall follow at his coming. The mystical head having got above the waters of death, he cannot but bring forth the members after him in due time.

They shall come forth with inexpressible joy: for then shall that passage of Scripture, which, in its immediate scope, respected the Babylonish captivity, be fully accomplished in its extensive spiritual view: "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust." As a bride adorned for her husband goes forth of her bedchamber unto the marriage; so shall the saints

go forth of their graves “unto the marriage of the Lamb.” Then shall they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb in highest strains—death being quite swallowed up in victory. They had, while in this life, sometimes sung by faith the triumphant song over death and the grave, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” but when they sing the same from sight and sense, the doubts and fears which frequently disturbed and disquieted their minds are for ever cashiered.

May we not suppose the soul and body of every saint, as in mutual embraces, to rejoice in each other, and triumph in the happy meeting again? and may not one imagine the body to address the soul thus? ‘O my soul, have we got together again, after so long a separation! art thou come back into thine old habitation, never more to remove! O joyful meeting! how unlike is our present state to what our case was when a separation was made betwixt us at death! Now is our mourning turned into joy; the light and gladness sometimes sown are now sprung up, and there is a perpetual spring in Emmanuel’s land! Blessed be the day in which I was united to thee, whose chief care was to get Christ in as the hope of glory, and to make me a temple for his Holy Spirit! O blessed soul, which, in the time of our pilgrimage, kept thine eye on the land then afar off, but now near at hand! thou tookest me into secret places, and there madest me bow these knees before the Lord, that I might bear a part in our humiliations before him: and now is the due time; and I am lifted up. Thou didst employ this tongue in confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings; which

henceforth shall be employed in praising for evermore. Thou madest these (sometimes) weeping eyes sow that seed of tears, which is now sprung up in joy that shall never end. I was happily beat down by thee, and kept in subjection, while others pampered their flesh, and made their bellies their gods; to their own destruction: and now I gloriously arise, to take my place in the mansions of glory; whilst they are dragged out of their graves, to be cast into fiery flames. Now, my soul, thou shalt complain no more of a sick and painful body; thou shalt be no more clogged with weak and weary flesh: I shall now hold pace with thee in the praises of our God for evermore.' And may not the soul say: 'O happy day, in which I return to dwell in that blessed body, which was, and is, and will be for ever, a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit! Now shall I be eternally knit to thee! the silver cord shall never be loosed more: death shall never make another separation betwixt us. Arise then, my body, and come away: and let these eyes, which served to weep over my sins, behold now, with joy, the face of our glorious Redeemer: lo! this is our God, and we have waited for him. Let these ears, which served to hear the word of life in the temple below; come now and hear the hallelujahs in the temple above. Let these feet, that carried me to the congregation of saints on earth, take their place now among those who stand by. And let this tongue, which confessed Christ before men, and used to be still dropping something to his commendation, join the choir of the upper house in his praises for evermore. Thou shalt fast no more, but keep an ever-

lasting feast : neither shall thy countenance be overclouded ; but thou shalt shine for ever, as the star in the firmament. We took part together in the fight ; come now, let us go together to receive and wear the crown.'

But, on the other hand, the wicked shall be raised by the power of Christ, as a just Judge, who is to render vengeance to his enemies. The same divine power which shut up their souls in hell, and kept their bodies in a grave, as in a prison, shall bring them forth, that soul and body together may receive the dreadful sentence of eternal damnation, and be shut up together in the prison of hell.

They shall come forth of their graves with unspeakable horror and consternation. They shall be dragged forth, as so many malefactors out of a dungeon, to be led to execution ; crying to the mountains and to the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of the Lamb. Fearful was the cry in Egypt, that night the destroying angel went through and slew their first-born. Dreadful were the shouts at the earth's opening her mouth, and swallowing up Dathan and Abiram, and all that appertained to them. What hideous crying then must there be, when, at the sound of the last trumpet, the earth and sea shall open their mouths, and cast forth all the wicked world, delivering them up to the dreadful Judge ! They who, while they lived in the world, were profane debauchees, covetous worldlings, or formal hypocrites, shall then, in anguish of mind, wring their hands, beat their breasts, and bitterly lament their case ; roaring forth their complaints, and calling themselves fools and madmen, for having

acted so mad a part in this life, and not having believed what they then see. They were driven away in their wickedness at death; and now all their sins rise with them, and, like so many serpents, twist themselves about their wretched souls, and bodies too, which now have a frightful meeting after a long separation.

Then we may suppose the miserable body thus to accost the soul: ‘Hast thou again found me, O mine enemy, my worst enemy, savage, cruel soul! Cursed be the day that ever we met! If I behooved to be thine, O that I had been one of thy dogs, rather than thy body: for then wouldst thou have taken more true care of me than thou didst. O cruel kindness! hast thou thus hugged me to death, thus nourished me to the slaughter? Is this the effect of thy tenderness for me? Is this what I am to reap of thy pains and concerns about me? What do riches and pleasures avail now, when this fearful reckoning is come, of which thou hadst fair warning? O cruel grave! why didst thou not close thy mouth upon me for ever? why didst thou not hold fast thy prisoner? why hast thou shaken me out, while I lay still, and was at rest? Cursed soul! wherefore didst thou not abide in thy place, wrapt up in flames of fire? wherefore art thou come back to take me also down to the pit? Thou madest me an instrument of unrighteousness; and now I must be thrown into the fire. This tongue was by thee employed in mocking at religion, cursing, swearing, lying, backbiting, and boasting; and withheld from glorifying God: and now it must not have so much as a drop of water to cool it in the flames. Thou didst

withdraw mine ears from hearing the sermons which gave warning of this day. Thou foundest ways and means to stop them from attending to seasonable exhortations, admonitions, and reproofs. But why didst thou not stop them from hearing the sound of this dreadful trumpet? why didst thou not rove on the wings of imagination, thereby, as it were, transporting me during these frightful transactions, as thou wast wont to do when I was set down at sermons, communions, prayers, and godly conferences; that I might now have as little sense of the one, as I formerly had of the other? But ah! I must burn for ever, for thy love to thy profanity, thy sensuality, thy unbelief and hypocrisy.' But may not the soul answer: 'Wretched and vile carcase, I am now driven back into thee! O that thou hadst lain for ever rotting in thy grave! Had I not torment enough before? must I be knit to thee again, that, being joined together as two dry sticks for the fire, the wrath of God may the more keenly burn us up? It was by caring for you, I lost myself. It was your back and your belly, and the gratifying of your senses, which ruined me. How often was I ensnared by your ears? how often betrayed by your eyes? It was to spare you, that I neglected opportunities of making peace with God, loitered away Sabbaths, lived in the neglect of prayer, went to the house of mirth rather than to the house of mourning; and that I choosed to deny Christ, and forsake his cause and interests in the world: and so am fallen a sacrifice to your cursed ease. When at any time my conscience began to awake, and I was setting myself to think of my sins, and the misery I have

felt since we parted, and now feel; it was you that diverted me from these thoughts, and drew me off to make provision for thee, O wretched flesh. By your silken cords of fleshly lusts, I was drawn to destruction, over the belly of my light and conscience: but now they are turned into iron chains, with which I am to be held under wrath for evermore. Ah, wretched profits! ah, cursed pleasures! for which I must lie for ever in utter darkness.' But no complaints will then avail. "O that men were wise; that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

As to the qualities with which the bodies of the saints shall be endowed at the resurrection, the apostle tells us, they shall be raised incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

(1.) The bodies of the saints shall be raised incorruptible. They are now as the bodies of others, a very mass of corruption, full of the seeds of diseases and death. But, at the resurrection, they leave all the seeds of corruption behind them in the grave; and rise incorruptible, incapable of the least indisposition or sickness; and much more of dying.

(2.) They shall be glorious bodies, full of splendour and brightness. The most beautiful face, and best proportioned body that now appears in the world, is not to be named in comparison with the body of the meanest saint at the resurrection; for "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun."

If there was a dazzling glory on Moses' face when he came down from the mount, and if Stephen's face was as it had been the face of an angel when he stood before the council; how much more shall the faces of the saints be beautiful and glorious, full of sweet agreeable majesty, when they have put off all corruption, and shine as the sun! But observe, this beauty of the saints is not restricted to their faces, but diffuses itself through their whole bodies; for the whole body is raised in glory, and shall be fashioned like unto their Lord and Saviour's glorious body: in whose transfiguration not only did his face shine as the sun, but also "his raiment was white as the light."

(3.) They shall be powerful and strong bodies. The strongest men on earth being frail and mortal, may justly be reckoned weak and feeble: their strength, however great, is quickly worn out and consumed. Many of the saints now have bodies weaker than others: but the feeble among them "at that day shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God." Vastly great must the strength of glorified bodies be, seeing they shall bear up under an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The mortal body is not at all adapted to such a state. Do transports of joy occasion death as well as excessive grief? And can it bear up under a weight of glory? Can it subsist in union with a soul filled with heaven's raptures? The Scripture has plainly told us, that "flesh and blood" (namely, in their present frail state,) "cannot inherit the kingdom of God." How strong must the bodily eyes be, which, to the soul's eternal comfort, shall behold the dazzling

glory and splendour of the New Jerusalem, and steadfastly look at the transcendent glory and brightness of the man Christ, the Lamb, who is the light of that city, the inhabitants whereof shall shine as the sun? The Lord of heaven doth now, in mercy, hold back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it, that mortals may not be confounded with the rays of glory which shine forth from it. But then the vail shall be removed, and they made able to behold it, to their unspeakable joy.

(4.) They shall be spiritual bodies. Not that they shall be changed into spirits; but they shall be spiritual in respect of their spirit-like qualities and endowments. The body shall be absolutely subservient to the soul, subject to it, and influenced by it; and therefore, no more a clog to its activity, nor the animal appetites a snare to it. The soul, in this life, is so much influenced by the body, that in Scripture style it is said to be carnal; but then the body shall be spiritual, readily serving the soul in the business of heaven, and in that only, as if it had no more relation to earth than a spirit. It will have no further need of the now necessary supports of life, namely, food and raiment, and the like: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

As to the qualities of the bodies of the wicked at the resurrection, I find the Scripture speaks but little of them. Whatever they may need, they shall not get a drop of water to cool their tongue. Whatever may be said of their weakness, it is certain they

will be continued for ever in life, that they may be ever dying: they shall bear up, howsoever unwillingly, under the load of God's wrath, and shall not faint away under it: "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night." They shall not partake of the glory and beauty of the saints. All their glory dies with them, and shall never rise again. Daniel tells us, they "shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt." Shame follows sin as the shadow followeth the body; but the wicked in this world walk in the dark, and often under a disguise: nevertheless, when the Judge comes in flaming fire at the last day, they will be brought to the light; their mask will be taken off, and the shame of their nakedness will clearly appear to themselves and others, and fill their faces with confusion. Their shame will be too deep for blushes; but all faces shall gather blackness at that day, when they shall go forth of their graves as malefactors out of their prison to execution: for their resurrection is the resurrection of damnation. The greatest beauties, who pride themselves in their comeliness of body, not regarding their deformed souls, will then appear with a ghastly countenance, a death-like visage. They shall rise also to everlasting contempt. They will be most despicable in the eyes of the saints, even of those saints who gave them honour here, either for their high station, the gifts of God in them, or because they were of the same human nature with themselves. But then shall their bodies be as so many loathsome carcases, which they shall go forth and look upon with abhorrence; yea, "they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." The

word here rendered “an abhorring,” is the same which, in the other text, is rendered “contempt:” and Isaiah and Daniel point at one and the same thing, namely, the loathsomeness of the wicked at the resurrection. They will be loathsome in the eyes of one another. The unclean wretches were never so lovely to each other as then they will be loathsome: dear companions in sin will then be an abhorring each one to his fellow; and the wicked, great and honourable men, shall be no more regarded by their wicked subjects, their servants, or their slaves.

USE I.—Of comfort to the people of God. The doctrine of the resurrection is a spring of consolation and joy unto you. Think on it, O believers, when ye are in the house of mourning, for the loss of your godly relations or friends, “that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope;” for ye will meet again. They are but lain down, to rest in their beds for a little while, but in the morning of the resurrection they will awake again, and come forth of their graves. The vessel of honour had much alloy of base metal in it; and therefore it behooved to be melted down, that it may be refined and fashioned more gloriously. Do but wait awhile, and you shall see it come forth out of the furnace of the earth, vying with the stars in brightness, nay, as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. Have you laid your infant children in the grave? you will see them again. Your God calls himself the God of your seed; which, according to our Saviour’s exposition, secures the glorious resurrection of the body. Wherefore, let the covenant you embraced for yourself and your babes now in the dust, comfort your

heart in the joyful expectation, that, by virtue thereof, they shall be raised up in glory. Be not discouraged by reason of a weak and sickly body : there is a day coming when they shall be every whit whole. And although, perhaps, thy weakness will not allow thee now to go one furlong to meet the Lord in public ordinances ; yet the day cometh when thy body shall be no more a clog to thee, but thou shalt meet the Lord in the air. It will be with the saints coming up from the grave, as with the Israelites when they came out of Egypt : “ There was not one feeble person among their tribes.” O that those who are now so desirous to be beautiful and handsome, would not be too hasty to effect it with their foolish and sinful arts ; but study the heavenly art of beautifying the body, by endeavouring now to become all glorious within with the graces of God’s Spirit—this would at length make them admirable and everlasting beauties. Thou must indeed, O believer, grapple with death, and shalt get the first fall ; but thou shalt rise again, and come off victorious at last. Thou must go down to the grave ; but though it be thy long home, it will not be thine everlasting home.

Thy friends indeed will leave thee there : but thy God will not. What God said to Jacob concerning his going down to Egypt, he says to thee concerning thy going down to the grave : “ Fear not to go down—I will go down with thee,—and I will also surely bring thee up again.” O solid comfort ! O glorious hopes ! “ Wherefore comfort yourselves and one another with these words.”

USE II.—Of terror to all unregenerate men. Ye who are yet in your natural state, look at this eter-

nal state ; and consider what will be your part in it, if ye be not in time brought into the state of grace. Think, O sinner, on that day, when the trumpet shall sound, at the voice of which the doors of the grave shall fly open, the devouring depths of the sea shall throw up their dead, and the earth cast forth hers ; and death every where, in the excess of astonishment, shall let go its prisoners ; and thy wretched soul and body shall be re-united, to be sisted before the tribunal of God. Then, if thou hadst a thousand worlds at thy disposal, thou wouldst gladly give them all away, upon condition thou mightest lie still in thy grave with the hundredth part of that ease wherewith thou hast sometimes lain at home on the Lord's day : or, if that cannot be obtained, that thou mightest be but a spectator of the transactions of that day, as thou hast been at some solemn occasions, and rich gospel-feasts : or, if even that is not to be purchased, that a mountain or a rock might fall on thee, and cover thee from the face of the Lamb. Ah ! how are men bewitched, thus to trifle away the precious time of life, in almost as little concern about death, as if they were like the beasts that perish ! Some will be telling where their corpses must be laid ; while yet they have not seriously considered whether their graves shall be their beds, where they shall awake with joy in the morning of the resurrection ; or their prisons, out of which they shall be brought to receive the fearful sentence. Remember, now is your seed-time ; and as ye sow, ye shall reap. God's seed-time begins at death ; and at the resurrection, the bodies of the wicked, that were sown full of sins, that lie down with

them in the dust, shall spring up again, sinful, wretched, and vile. That body, which is not now employed in God's service, but is abused by uncleanness and lasciviousness, will then be brought forth in all its vileness, thenceforth to lodge with unclean spirits. The body of the drunkard shall then stagger by reason of the wine of the wrath of God poured into him without mixture. Those who now please themselves in their revellings, will reel to and fro at another rate; when, instead of their songs and music, they shall hear the sound of the last trumpet. Many toil their bodies for worldly gain, who will be loath to distress them for the benefit of their souls; by labour, unreasonably hard, they will quite unfit them for the service of God; and, when they have done, will reckon it a very good reason for shifting duty, that they are already tired out with other business: but the day cometh when they will be made to abide a yet greater stress. They will go several miles for back and belly, who will not go half the way for the good of their immortal souls; they will be sickly and unable on the Lord's day, who will be tolerably well all the rest of the week. But when that trumpet sounds, none shall be missing in that great congregation. When the bodies of the saints shine as the sun, frightful will the looks of their persecutors be. Many faces, now fair, will then gather blackness. They shall be no more admired and caressed for that beauty which has a worm at the root, that will cause it to issue in loathsomeness and deformity. They shall be stripped of all their ornaments, and "shall be an abhorring to all flesh," and serve as a foil to set off the beauty and glory of the righteous, and make it appear the brighter.

Now is the time to secure for yourselves a part of the resurrection of the just. The which if ye would do, unite with Jesus Christ by faith, rising spiritually from sin, and glorifying God with your bodies. He is “the resurrection and the life.” If your bodies be members of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, they shall certainly arise in glory. How can one imagine, that those who continue dead while they live, shall come forth at the last day unto the resurrection of life? But that will be the privilege of all those, who, having first consecrated their souls and bodies to the Lord by faith, do glorify him with their bodies as well as their souls; living and acting to him, and for him; yea, and suffering for him too, when he calls them to it.

HEAD IV.

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

MATTHEW xxv. 31—34, 41, 46.

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed, &c.—Unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, &c.—And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.”

THE dead being raised, and those found alive at the coming of the Judge changed, follows the gen-

eral judgment, plainly and awfully described in this portion of Scripture; in which we shall take notice of the following particulars:—(1.) The coming of the Judge: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory,” &c. The Judge is Jesus Christ the Son of man; the same, by whose almighty power, as he is God, the dead will be raised. He is also called the King, verse 34. The judging of the world being an act of the royal Mediator’s kingly office, he will come in glory; glorious in his own person, and having a glorious retinue, even all the holy angels with him, to minister unto him at this great solemnity. (2.) The Judge’s mounting the tribunal. He is a King, and therefore it is a throne, a glorious throne: “He shall sit upon the throne of his glory,” verse 31. (3.) The compearance of the parties. These are all nations: all and every one, small and great, of whatsoever nation, who ever were, are, or shall be on the face of the earth; all shall be gathered before him; sisted before his tribunal. (4.) The sorting of them. He shall separate the elect sheep and reprobate goats, setting each apart by themselves; as a shepherd, who feeds his sheep and goats together all the day, separates them at night, verse 32. The godly he will set on his right hand, as the most honourable place; the wicked, on the left, verse 33. Yet so as they shall be both before him, verse 32. It seems to be an allusion to a custom in the Jewish courts; in which, one sat at the right hand of the judges, who wrote the sentence of absolution; another at their left, who wrote the sentence of condemnation. (5.) The sentencing of the parties, and that according to their works; the right-

eous being absolved, and the wicked condemned, verse 34, 41. Lastly, The execution of both sentences, in the driving away of the wicked into hell, and carrying the godly to heaven, verse 46.

DOCTRINE—*There shall be a general judgment.*

This doctrine I shall, (1.) Confirm; (2.) Explain; and, (3.) Apply.

I. For confirmation of this great truth, that there shall be a general judgment—

1. It is evident from plain Scripture testimonies. The world has in all ages been told of it. Enoch, before the flood, taught it in his prophecy: “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all.” Daniel describes it: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” The apostle is very express: “He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.” God has not only said it, but he has sworn it: “We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” So that the truth of God is most solemnly pledged for it.

2. The rectoral justice and goodness of God, the sovereign ruler of the world, do necessarily require it, inasmuch as they require its being well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. Howbeit, we often now see wickedness exalted, while truth and righteousness fall in the streets; piety oppressed, while profanity and irreligion triumph. This is so very ordinary, that every one, who sincerely embraceth the way of holiness, must and doth lay his account with the loss of all he has, which the world can take away from him: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." But it is not consistent with the justice and goodness of God, that the affairs of men should always continue in this state, from one generation to another; but that every man be rewarded according to his works: and since that is not done in this life, there must be a judgment to come: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven." There will be a day, in which the tables will be turned; and the wicked shall be called to an account for all their sins, and suffer the due punishment of them: and the pious shall be the prosperous; for, as the apostle argues for the happy resurrection of the saints, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." It is true, God sometimes punisheth the wicked in this life, that men may know he is a God that judgeth in the earth: but yet much wickedness remains unpun-

ished and undiscovered, to be a pledge of the judgment to come. If none of the wicked were punished here, they would conclude that God had utterly forsaken the earth; if all of them were punished in this life, men would be apt to think there is no after-reckoning: therefore, in the wisdom of God, some are punished now, and some not. Sometimes the Lord smites sinners in the very act of sin; to show unto the world, that he is witness to all their wickedness, and will call them to an account for it. Sometimes he delays long ere he strikes; that he may discover to the world, that he forgets not men's ill deeds, though he does not presently punish them. Besides all this, the sins of many do outlive them; and the impure fountain, by them opened, runs long after they are dead and gone. As in the case of Jeroboam the first king of the ten tribes, whose sin did run on all along unto the end of that unhappy kingdom: "The children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them, until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight."

3. The resurrection of Christ is a certain proof that there shall be a day of judgment. This argument Paul useth to convince the Athenians that Jesus Christ will be the Judge of the world: "Whereof (says he) he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." The Judge is already named, his patent written and sealed, yea, and read before all men, in his rising again from the dead. Hereby God hath given assurance of it: he hath, by raising Christ from the dead, exhibited his credentials as Judge of the world. When, in the

days of his humiliation, he was sisted before a tribunal, arraigned, accused, and condemned of men; he plainly told them of this judgment, and that he himself would be the Judge: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." And now that he was raised from the dead, though condemned as a blasphemer on this very head, is it not an undeniable proof from heaven of the truth of what he asserted? Moreover, this was one of the great ends of Christ's death and resurrection: "for to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord (that is, the Lord Judge, as is evident from the context) both of the dead and of the living."

Lastly, Every man bears about with him a witness to this within his own breast: "which shows the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." There is a tribunal erected within every man, where conscience is accuser, witness, and judge, binding over the sinner to the judgment of God. This fills the most profligate wretches with horror, and inwardly stings them upon the commission of some atrocious crime; in effect, summoning them to answer for it before the Judge of the quick and dead. And this it doth, even when the crime is secret, and hid from the eyes of the world. It reacheth those whom the laws of men cannot reach, because of their power or craft. When men have fled from the judgment of their fellow-creatures, yet, go where they will, conscience, as the supreme Judge's officer, still

keeps hold of them, reserving them in its chains to the judgment of the great day.

II. For explication, the following particulars may serve to give some view of the nature and transactions of that great day:—

1. God shall judge the world by Jesus Christ: “He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.” The Psalmist tells us, that “God is judge himself.” The holy blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is Judge, in respect of judiciary authority, dominion, and power; but the Son incarnate is the Judge, in respect of dispensation, and special exercise of that power. The judgment shall be exercised or performed by him, as the royal Mediator; for he has a delegated power of judgment from the Father, as his servant, his king, whom he hath “set upon his holy hill of Zion,” and to whom he “hath committed all judgment.” This is a part of the Mediator’s exaltation, given him in consequence of his voluntary humiliation: “He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” The which is explained by the apostle himself, of “standing before the judgment-seat of Christ.” So he who was judged and condemned of men, shall be the Judge of men and angels.

2. Jesus Christ the Judge, descending from heaven into the air, shall “come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” This his coming will be a mighty surprise to the world, which

will be found in deep security: foolish virgins sleeping, and the wise slumbering. There will then be much luxury and debauchery in the world, little sobriety and watchfulness; a great throng of business, but a great scarcity of faith and holiness: “As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark; and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot: they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded.—Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” He shall come most gloriously; for he will “come in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.” When he came in the flesh to die for sinners, he laid aside the robes of his glory, and was despised and rejected of men. But when he comes again to judge the world, such shall be his visible glory and majesty, that it shall cast an eternal vail over all earthly glory, and fill his greatest enemies with fear and dread. Never had prince or potentate in the world such a glorious train as will accompany this Judge: all the holy angels shall come with him, for his honour and service.

3. At the coming of the Judge, the summons is given to the parties, by the sound of the last trumpet, at which the dead are raised, and those found alive changed. O loud trumpet, that shall be heard at once in all the corners of the earth and of the sea! O wonderful voice, that will not only disturb those who sleep in the dust, but effectually awaken, rouse them out of their sleep, and raise

them from death ! Yea, were stormy winds casting down the lofty oaks, the seas roaring and swallowing up the ships, the most dreadful thunders going along the heavens, lightnings every where flashing, the earth quaking, trembling, opening, and swallowing up whole cities, and burying multitudes at once; the dead would still enjoy a perfect repose, and sleep soundly in the dust, though their own dust should be thrown out of its place. But at the sound of the trumpet they shall all awake. The morning is come, they can sleep no longer; the time of the dead, that they must be judged: they must get out of their graves, and appear before the Judge.

4. The Judge shall sit down on the tribunal; he shall sit on the throne of his glory. Some time he stood before a tribunal on earth, and was condemned as a malefactor: then shall he sit on his own tribunal, and judge the world. Some time he hung upon the cross, covered with shame: then he shall sit on a throne of glory. What this throne shall be, whether a bright cloud, or what else, I shall not inquire. Our eyes will give us an answer to that question at length. John “saw a great white throne.” “His throne (says Daniel) was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.” Whatever it be, doubtless it shall be a throne glorious beyond expression.

Leaving the discovery of the nature of the throne until that day, it concerns us more nearly to consider what a Judge will sit upon it; a point in which we are not left to uncertain conjectures. The Judge on the throne will be, (1.) A visible Judge, visible to our bodily eyes: “Every eye shall see him.” When

God gave the law on Mount Sinai, the people saw no similitude, only they heard a voice ; but when he calls the world to an account how they have observed his law, the man Christ being Judge, we shall see our Judge with our eyes, either to our eternal comfort or confusion, according to the entertainment we give him now. That very body which was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem betwixt two thieves, shall then be seen on the throne, shining in glory. We now see him symbolically in the sacrament of his supper ; the saints see him by the eye of faith ; then all shall see him. (2.) A Judge having full authority and power, to render unto every one according to his works. Christ, as God, hath authority of himself ; and, as Mediator, he hath a judicial power and authority, which his Father has invested him with, according to the covenant betwixt the Father and the Son for the redemption of sinners. And his divine glory will be a light, by which all men shall see clearly to read his commission for this great and honourable employment : “ All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth.” He hath “ the keys of hell and of death.” There can be no appeal from his tribunal : sentence once passed there, must stand for ever ; there is no reversing of it. All appeals are from an inferior court to a superior one : but when God gives sentence against a man, where can he find a higher court to bring his process to ? This judgment is the Mediator’s judgment, and therefore the last judgment. If the Intercessor be against us, who can be for us ? If Christ condemn us, who will absolve us ? (3.) A Judge of infinite wisdom. His eyes will pierce into, and clearly discern the most in-

tricate cases. His omniscience qualifies him for judging of the most retired thoughts, as well as of words and works. He is the Searcher of hearts, to whom nothing can be hid or perplexed; but “all things are naked and open unto his eyes.” (4.) A most just Judge, a Judge of perfect integrity. He is the righteous Judge, and his throne a great white throne, from whence no judgment shall proceed but what is most pure and spotless. With the Judge on this throne, there will be no respect of persons; he will neither regard the persons of the rich nor of the poor, but just judgment shall go forth in every one’s cause. Lastly, An omnipotent Judge, able to put his sentence in execution. The united force of devils and wicked men will be altogether unable to withstand him. They cannot retard the execution of the sentence against them one moment, far less can they stop it altogether. “Thousand thousands (of angels) minister unto him.” And by the breath of his mouth he can drive the cursed herd whither he pleaseth.

5. The parties shall compear. These are men and devils. Although these last, (the fallen angels,) were, from the first moment of their sinning, subjected to the wrath of God, and were cast down to hell—and wheresoever they go they carry their hell about with them—yet it is evident that they are “reserved unto judgment,” namely, “unto the judgment of the great day.” And then they shall be solemnly and publicly judged. “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” At that day they shall answer for their trade of sinning and tempting to sin, which they have been carrying on from the beginning.

Those wicked spirits now in chains (though not in such strait custody but that “they go about like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour”) shall then receive their final sentence, and be shut up in the prison of hell, where they shall be held in extreme and unspeakable torment through all eternity: “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” In the prospect of which, the devils said to Christ, “Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?”

But what we are chiefly concerned to take notice of, is the case of men at that day. All men must compear before this tribunal. All of every age, quality, and condition; the great and small, noble and ignoble; none are excepted. Adam and Eve, with all their sons and daughters; every one who has had, or, to the end of the world, shall have a living soul united to a body, will make up this great congregation. Even those who refused to come to the throne of grace, shall be forced to the bar of justice: for there can be no hiding from the all-seeing Judge, no flying from him who is present every where, no resisting of him who is armed with almighty power. “We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.” “Before him shall be gathered all nations,” says the text. This is to be done by the ministry of angels. By them shall the elect be gathered: “Then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds.” And they also shall gather the reprobate: “So shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall

send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.”

6. There shall be a separation made betwixt the righteous and the wicked. There is no necessity to wait for this separation till the trial be over; since the parties do rise out of their graves, with plain outward marks of distinction. The separation seems to be effected by that double gathering before mentioned; the one of the elect, the other of them that do iniquity. The elect, being caught up together in the clouds, meet the Lord in the air, and so are set on his right hand; and the reprobate left on the earth, upon the Judge's left hand. Here is now a total separation of two parties, who were always opposite to each other, in their principles, aims, and manner of life; who, when together, were a burden the one to the other, under which the one groaned, and the other raged: but now they are freely parted, never to come together any more.

Now, let us look to the right hand, and there we will see a glorious company of saints, shining as so many stars in their orbs; and with a cheerful countenance beholding him who sitteth upon the throne. Here will be two wonderful sights, which the world used not to see: (1.) A great congregation of saints, in which there is not so much as one hypocrite. There was a bloody Cain in Adam's family, a cursed Ham in Noah's family in the ark, a treacherous Judas in Christ's own family; but in that company shall be none but sealed ones, members of Christ, having all one Father. And this is a sight reserved for that day. (2.) All the godly upon one side.

Seldom or never do the saints on earth make such a harmony but there are some jarring strings among them. It is not to be expected, that men who but see in part, though they be all going to one city, will agree as to every step in the way: no, we need not look for it in this state of imperfection. But at that day Paul and Barnabas shall meet in peace and unity, though once the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder, the one from the other. There shall be no more divisions, no more separate standing, amongst those who belong to Christ. All the godly of the different parties shall then be upon one side; seeing, whatever were their differences in lesser things while in the world, yet, even then, they met and concentrated all in one Lord Jesus Christ, by a true and lively faith, and in the one way of holiness or practical godliness.

Look to the left hand, and there you will see the cursed goats (all the wicked ones, from Cain to the last ungodly person who shall be in the world) gathered together into one most miserable congregation. There are many assemblies of the wicked now; then there shall be but one. (And remember thou shalt not be a mere spectator, to look at these two so different companies: but must thyself take thy place in one of the two, and shalt share with the company, whatever hand it be upon.) Those who now abhor no society so much as that of the saints, would then be glad to be allowed to get in among them; though it were but to lie among their feet. But then not one tare shall be found with the wheat: "he will thoroughly purge his floor." O how terrible will this separation be to the ungodly! How dreadful

will this gathering them together into one company be! What they will not believe, they will then see, namely, that but few are saved. They think it enough now to be neighbour-like, and can securely follow the multitude: but the multitude on the left hand will yield them no comfort. And how dreadful will the faces of companions in sin be to one another there! What doleful shrieks, when the drunkards who have had many a jovial day together, shall see one another in the face: when the husband and the wife, the parents and children, masters and servants, and neighbours, who have been snares and stumbling-blocks to one another, to the ruin of their own souls, and those of their relatives, shall meet again in that miserable society! Then will there be curses instead of salutations; and tearing of themselves, and raging against one another, instead of the wonted embraces.

7. The parties shall be tried. The trial cannot be difficult, in regard the Judge is omniscient, and nothing can be hid from him. But, that his righteous judgment may be made evident to all, he will set the hidden things of darkness in clearest light at that trial.

Men shall be tried, *first*, upon their works: for “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” The Judge will try every man’s conversation, and set his deeds done in the body, with all the circumstances thereof, in a true light. Then will many actions, commended, and applauded of men, as good and just, be discovered to have been evil and abominable in the sight of God: and many

works now condemned by the world, will be approven and commended by the great Judge as good and just. Secret things will be brought to light; and what was hid from the view of the world shall be laid open. Wickedness, which hath kept its lurking-place in spite of all human search, will then be brought forth to the glory of God, and the confusion of impenitent sinners who hid it. Every good action shall then be remembered; and the hidden religion and good works, most industriously concealed by the saints from the eyes of men, shall no more lie hid: for though the Lord will not allow men to proclaim every man his own goodness, yet he himself will do it in due time. *Secondly*, Their words shall be judged: “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Not a word spoken for God and his cause in the world, from love to himself, shall be forgotten. They are all kept in remembrance, and shall be brought forth as evidences of faith, and of an interest in Christ. “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him.—And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” And the tongue, which did run at random, shall then confess to God; and the speaker shall find it to have been followed, and every word noted that dropped from his unsanctified lips: “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” And if they shall give an account of idle words, that is, words spoken to no good purpose, neither to God’s glory, one’s own, or one’s

neighbour's good; how much more shall men's wicked words, their sinful oaths, curses, lies, filthy communications, and bitter words, be called over again that day? The tongues of many shall then fall upon themselves, and ruin them. *Thirdly*, Men's thoughts shall be brought into judgment: the Judge "will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Thoughts go free from man's judgment, but not from the judgment of the heart-searching God, who knows men's thoughts, without the help of signs to discern them by. The secret springs of men's actions will then be brought to light, and the sins that never came further than the heart, will then be laid open. O what a figure will man's corrupt nature make, when all his speculative impurities are exposed! The rottenness that is within many a whited sepulchre, the speculative filthiness and wantonness, murder and malignity, now lurking in the hearts of men, as in the chambers of imagery, will then be discovered; and what good was in the hearts of any, shall no more lie concealed. If it was in their hearts to build a house to the Lord, they shall hear that they did well that it was in their heart.

This trial will be righteous and impartial, accurate and searching, clear and evident. The Judge is the righteous Judge, and he will do right to every one. He has a just balance for good and evil actions, and for honest and false hearts: "The fire (which tries things most exquisitely) shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Man's judgment is oftentimes perplexed and confused; but here the whole process shall be clear and evident, as written with a sunbeam. It shall be clear to the Judge, to whom no

case can be intricate; to the parties, who shall be convinced. And the multitudes on both sides shall see the Judge is clear when he judgeth: for then the heavens shall declare his righteousness in the audience of all the world; and so it shall be universally known.

On these accounts it is, that this trial is held out in the Scripture under the notion of opening of books; and men are said to be “judged out of those things written in the books.” The Judge of the world, who infallibly knoweth all things, hath no need of books to be laid before him, to prevent mistakes in any point of law or fact: but the expression points at his proceeding as most nice, accurate, just, and well-grounded in every step of it. Now, there are four books that shall be opened in that day:—

First, The book of God’s remembrance or omniscience. This is an exact record of every man’s state, thoughts, words, and deeds, good or evil: it is, as it were, a day-book, in which the Lord puts down all that passeth in men’s hearts, lips, and lives; and it is a filling up every day that one lives. In it are recorded men’s sins and good works, secret and open, with all their circumstances. Here are registered all their privileges, mercies temporal and spiritual, some time laid to their hand; the checks, admonitions, and rebukes, given by teachers, neighbours, afflictions, and men’s own consciences: every thing in its due order. This book will serve only as a libel in respect of the ungodly: but it will be for another use in respect of the godly, namely, for a memorial of their good. The opening of it is the Judge’s bringing to light what is written in it; the

reading, as it were, of the libel and memorial respectively in their hearing.

Secondly, The book of conscience will be opened, and shall be as a thousand witnesses to prove the fact: "Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." Conscience is a censor, going with every man whithersoever he goes, taking an account of his deeds done in the body, and, as it were, noting them in a book; the which being opened, will be found a double of the former, so far as it relates to one's own state and case. Though the book be sealed now, (the conscience blind, dumb, and deaf,) the seals will then be broken, and the book opened. There shall not be a silent conscience, and far less a seared conscience, amongst all the ungodly crew; but their consciences shall be most quick-sighted and most lively in that day. None shall then call good evil, or evil good. Ignorance of what sin is, and what things are sins, will have no place among them; and the subtle reasonings of men in favour of their lusts, will then be for ever baffled by their own consciences. Thus shall the Judge make every man see himself in the glass of his own conscience, which will make quick work.

Thirdly, The book of the law shall be opened. This book is the standard and rule by which is known what is right and what is wrong, as also what sentence is to be passed accordingly on those who are under it. As to the opening of this book in its statutory part, which shows what is sin and what is duty, it falls in with the opening of the book of conscience. For conscience is set, by the sovereign Lawgiver, in every man's breast, to be his private

teacher, to show him the law; and his private pastor, to make application of the same: and, at that day, it will be perfectly fit for its office; so that the conscience, which is most stupid now, shall then read to the man most accurate but dreadful lectures on the law. But what seems (mainly at least) pointed at by the opening of this book, is the opening of that part of it which determines the reward of men's works. Now, the law promiseth life, upon perfect obedience; but none can be found, on the right hand or on the left, who will pretend to that, when once the book of conscience is opened: it threateneth death upon disobedience, and will effectually bring it upon all under its dominion. And this part of the book of the law, determining the reward of men's works, is opened only to show what must be the portion of the ungodly, and that there they may read their sentence before it be pronounced. But it is not opened for the sentence of the saints; for no sentence absolving a sinner could ever be drawn out of it. The law promiseth life, not as it is a rule of actions, but as a covenant of works; and therefore innocent man could not have demanded life upon his obedience, till the law was reduced into the form of a covenant, as was shown before. But the saints having been, in this life, brought under a new covenant, namely, the covenant of grace, were dead to the law, as a covenant of works, and it was dead to them. Wherefore, as they shall not now have any fears of death from it, so they can have no hopes of life from it, since "they are not under the law, but under grace." But for their sentence, another book is opened; of which in the next place.

Thus the book of the law is opened for the sentence against all those on the left hand; and by it they will clearly see the justice of the judgment against them, and how the Judge proceeds therein according to law. Nevertheless, there will be this difference, namely, that those who had only the natural law, and lived not under any special revelation, shall be judged by that law of nature they had in their hearts; which law bears “that they which commit such things (as they will stand convicted of) are worthy of death.” But those who had the written law, to whom the word of God came, as it has sounded in the visible church, shall be judged by that written law. So says the apostle: “For as many as have sinned without (the written) law, shall perish without (the written) law; and as many as have sinned in the law, (that is, under the written law,) shall be judged by the (written) law.”

Lastly, Another book shall be opened, “which is the book of life.” In this, the names of all the elect are written, as Christ said to his disciples, “Your names are written in heaven.” This book contains God’s gracious and unchangeable purpose, to bring all the elect to eternal life; and that, in order thereto, they be redeemed by the blood of his Son, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and raised up by him at the last day without sin. It is now lodged in the Mediator’s hand; and, having perfected the work the Father gave him to do, he shall, on the great day, produce and open the book, and present the persons therein named, “faultless before the presence of his glory,”—“not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” None of

them all, who are named in the book, shall be amissing. They shall be found qualified, according to the order of the book, redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, raised up without spot: what remains then, but that, according to the same book, they obtain the great end, namely, everlasting life? This may be gathered from that precious promise: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, (being raised in glory,) and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Here is now the ground of the saints' absolution, the ground of the blessed sentence they shall receive.

8. Then shall the Judge pronounce that blessed sentence on the saints, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Who can conceive the inexpressible joy with which these happy ones shall hear these words? Who can imagine that fulness of joy which will be poured into their hearts, with these words reaching their ears? And who can conceive how much of hell shall break into the hearts of all the ungodly, by these words of heaven? It is certain this sentence shall be pronounced before the sentence of damnation: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed," &c. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed," &c. There is no need of this order, that the saints may, without fear or affrightment, hear the other sentence on the reprobate: they who are raised in glory, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, presented without spot, and whose souls (for the

far greater part of them) have been so long in heaven before, shall not be capable of any such fear. But hereby they will be orderly brought in to sit in judgment, as Christ's assessors, against the ungodly, whose torment will be aggravated by it. It will be a hell to them, to be kept out of hell till they see the doors of heaven opened to receive the saints, who once dwelt in the same world with them, and perhaps in the same country, parish, or town, and sat under the same ministry with themselves. Like that unbelieving lord, they "shall see (the plenty) with their eyes, but shall not eat thereof." Every word of the blessed sentence shall be like an envenomed arrow shot into their hearts, while they see what they have lost, and from thence gather what they are to expect.

This sentence passeth on the saints "according to their works;" but not for their works, nor for their faith either, as if eternal life were merited by them. The sentence itself overthrows this absurd conceit. The kingdom they are called to, was prepared for them from the foundation of the world; not left to be merited by themselves, who were but of yesterday. They inherit it as sons, but procure it not to themselves, as servants do the reward of their work. They were redeemed by the blood of Christ, and clothed with his spotless righteousness, which is the proper cause of the sentence. They were also qualified for heaven by the sanctification of his Spirit; and hence it is according to their works. So that the ungodly world shall see now, that the Judge of the quick and dead does good to them who were good. Therefore it is added to the sentence, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me

meat," &c. which doth not denote the ground, but the evidence of their right to heaven: as if a Judge should say, he absolves a man pursued for debt, for the witnesses depone that it is paid already. So the apostle says: "But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Their overthrow in the wilderness was not the ground of God's displeasure with them, but it was an evidence of it. And thus our Lord teacheth us the necessary connection betwixt glory and good works, namely, works evangelically good: works having a respect to Jesus Christ, and done out of faith in him, and love to him, without which they will not be regarded in that day. And the saints will so far be judged according to such works, that the degrees of glory amongst them shall be according to these works: for it is an eternal truth, "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly."

Thus shall the good works of the godly have a glorious but a gratuitous reward; a reward of grace, not of debt, which will fill them with wonder at the riches of free grace, and the Lord's condescending to take any notice, especially such public notice, of their poor worthless works. The which seems to be the import of what they are said to answer, "saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered?" &c. And may they not justly wonder to see themselves set down to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, in consequence of a little meat or drink, (such as they had,) which they gave to a hungry or thirsty member of Christ, for his sake! O plentiful harvest, following upon the seed of good works! Rivers of pleasures springing up from, perhaps, "a cup of

cold water given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple!" Eternal mansions of glory rising out of a night's lodging, given to a saint who was a stranger! A visit to a sick saint, repaid by Christ himself, "coming in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels!" A visit made to a poor prisoner for the cause of Christ, repaid with a visit from the Judge of all, taking away the visitant with him to the palace of heaven, there to be ever with himself! These things will be matter of everlasting wonder; and should stir up all to sow liberally in time, while the seed-time of good works doth last. But it is Christ's stamp on good works that puts a value on them in the eye of a gracious God; which seems to be the import of our Lord's reply: "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

9. Now the saints having received their own sentence, "they shall judge the world," 1 Cor. vi. 2. This was not fulfilled when the empire became Christian, and Christians were made magistrates. No; the Psalmist tells us, "This honour have all the saints." And the apostle, in the forecited place, adds: "And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" Being called, they come to receive their kingdom, in the view of angels and men: they go, as it were, from the bar to the throne: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." They shall not only judge the world in Christ their head, by way of communion with him; by their works compared with those of these ungodly; or by way of testimony against them;

but they shall be assessors to Jesus Christ the Judge, giving their voice against them, consenting to his judgment as just, and saying, “Amen,” to the doom pronounced against all the ungodly: as is said of the saints upon the judgment of the great whore: “Hallelujah—for true and righteous are his judgments.” Thus the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning of the resurrection. Then, and not till then, shall that be fully accomplished which ye may read: “Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people.—This honour have all his saints.” O! what a strange turn of affairs will appear here! To see men of riches and power stand pale-faced before those whom they oppressed! To see the mocker stand trembling before those he mocked! the worldly wise man before those whom he accounted fools! All wrongs must be righted at length, and every one set in his proper place.

10. The Judge shall pronounce the sentence of damnation on all the ungodly multitude: “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Fearful doom! and that from the same mouth from whence proceeded the sentence of absolution before. O! what an aggravation of the misery of the wicked will it be, that he shall pronounce this sentence also! To hear the curse from mount Zion, must needs be most terrible; to be damned by him who came to save sinners, must be double damnation. But thus it shall be. The Lamb of God shall roar as a lion

against them: he shall excommunicate, and cast them out of his presence for ever, by a sentence from the throne, saying, "Depart from me, ye cursed." And all the saints shall say, "Hallelujah—true and righteous are his judgments." None were so compassionate as the saints when on earth, during the time of God's patience. But now that time is at an end: their compassion on the ungodly is swallowed up in joy, in the Mediator's glory, and his executing of just judgment, by which his enemies are made his footstool. Though sometimes the righteous man did weep in secret places for their pride, and because they would not hear; yet then he "shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked."

There is no wrong done them: "For I was an hungered, (saith our Lord,) and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." These are not only evidences of their ungodly and cursed state, but most proper causes and grounds of their condemnation: for though good works do not merit salvation, yet evil works merit damnation. Sins of one kind only, namely, of omission, are here mentioned: not that these alone shall then be discovered, (for the opening of the books lay all open,) but because these, though there were no more, are sufficient to damn unpardoned sinners. And if men shall be condemned for sins of omission, much more for sins of commission. The omission of works of charity and mercy is condescended on particularly, to stop the mouths of the wicked; for it

is most just, that he “have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy.” The mentioning of the omission of acts of charity and mercy towards the distressed members of Christ, intimates, that it is the judgment of those who have heard of Christ in the gospel, that is principally intended here in this portion of Scripture; and that the slighting of Christ will be the great cause of the ruin of those who hear the gospel: but the enmity of the hearts of the wicked against himself, is discovered by the entertainment they now give to his members.

In vain will they say, “When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst?” &c. for the Lord reckons, and will reckon the world’s unkindness to his people unkindness to himself: “In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.” O meat and drink, unhappily spared when a member of Christ was in need of it! O wretched neglect, that the stranger saint was not taken! O cursed clothing, may the wicked say, that was in my house, and was not brought out to clothe such a one! Cursed business, that diverted me from visiting such a sick saint! Wretch that I was! why did I sit at ease in my house when he was in prison, and did not visit him? Christ’s servants are now raised up on high, beyond the reach of sickness or pain; but I must now lie down in sorrow. Now shall they go to the palace of heaven, but I must go to the prison of hell.

But if our Lord thus resent men’s neglecting to help his people under these and the like distresses, what may they expect who are the authors and instruments of them? If they shall be fed with wrath, who fed them not when they were hungry, what shall

become of those who robbed and spoiled them, and took their own bread away from them? What a full cup of wrath shall be the portion of those who were so far from giving them meat or drink when hungry or thirsty, that they made it a crime for others to entertain them, and made themselves drunken with their blood! They must lodge with devils for evermore who took not in the Lord's people when strangers; then, what a lodging shall those have who drove them out of their own houses, out of their native land, and made them strangers? Men will be condemned for not clothing them when naked; then, how heavy must the sentence of those be who have stripped them, and made them go without clothing? Surely, if not visiting of them in sickness, or in a prison, shall be so severely punished, they shall not escape a most heavy doom who have cast them into prisons, and have put them under such hardships as have impaired their health, brought sickness on them, and cut their days, in prison or out of prison.

To put a face upon such wicked practices, men will pretend to retain an honour for Christ and religion, while they thus treat his members walking in his ways, and keeping the truth. They are here represented to say, "When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" As if they should say, 'Our bread, drink, lodging, clothing, and visits, were indeed refused, but not to Christ, but to a set of men who turned the world upside down, a humorous and fantastic sort of people, having laws diverse from all people; factious and rebellious, and therefore a very dangerous set of men.'

But although men cast iniquity upon the godly, and give them ill names, that they may treat them as criminals; all these pretences will avail them nothing in the great day, before the righteous Judge, nor before their own consciences either: but the real ground of their enmity against the saints will be found, to their own conviction, to be their enmity against Christ himself. This seems to be the import of the objection of the damned, and of the answer to it, "In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

Lastly, Sentence being passed on both parties, follows the full execution of the same: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." The damned shall get no reprieve, but go to their place without delay: they shall be driven away from the judgment-seat into hell; and the saints shall enter into the King's palace, namely, into heaven, the seat of the blessed. But our Lord Christ, and his glorious company, shall keep the field that day, and see the backs of all their enemies; for the damned go off first.

In this day of the Lord, the great day, shall be the general conflagration; by which those visible heavens, the earth, and sea, shall pass away. Not that they shall be annihilated, or reduced to nothing; that is not the operation of fire: but they shall be dissolved, and purged by that fire from all the effects of sin, or of the curse upon them, and then renewed, and made more glorious and stable. Of this conflagration the apostle Peter speaks: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and

the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." And of the renewing of the world, he adds, "Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

It seems most agreeable to the Scriptures, and to the nature of the thing, to conceive this conflagration to follow after the general judgment; sentence being passed on both parties before it. For it is not likely that the wicked shall at all stand on the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness: and as for this earth, it shall fly away, (which seems to denote a very quick despatch,) and it shall flee from his face who sits on the throne: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away." The execution of the sentence on the wicked is also thus expressed: they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence (or from the face) of the Lord."

Now, if the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, that are set forth for an example, was so dreadful, how terrible will that day be, when the whole world shall be at once in flames! How will wretched worldlings look when their darling world shall be all on fire! What heart can fully conceive the terror of that day to the wicked, when the whole fabric of heaven and earth shall at once be dissolved by that fire! when that miserable company shall be driven from the tribunal to the pit, with fire within them, and fire without them, and fire behind them, and on every hand of them, and fire before them, awaiting

them in the lake; whither this fire (for aught appears) may follow them !

As for the particular place of this judgment, our Lord, who infallibly knew it, being asked the question by his disciples, “ Where, Lord ? ” told them only, “ Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.” After which answer it is too much for men to renew the question. As for the time when it shall be, in vain do men search for what the Lord has purposely kept secret : “ It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in his own power.” The apostle Paul, after having very plainly described the second coming of Christ, adds, “ But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you : for yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” Nevertheless, some in several ages have made very bold with the time; and several particualar years, which are now past, have been given out to the world for the time of the end, by men who have pried into the secrets of God. Time has proclaimed to the world their rashness and folly : and it is likely they will be no more happy in their conjectures whose determinate time is yet to come. Let us rest in that he cometh. God hath kept the day hid from us, that we may be every day ready for it : “ Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.” And let us remember, that the last day of our life will determine our state in the last day of the world : and as we die, so shall we be judged.

I shall now close this subject with some application of what has been said.

USE I.—Of comfort to all the saints. Here is abundance of consolation to all who are in the state of grace. Whatever be your affliction in the world, this day will make up all your losses. “ Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” Though the world reproach, judge, and condemn you; the Judge will, at that day, absolve you, and bring forth your righteousness as the light. The world’s fools will then appear to have been the only wise men who were in it. Though the cross be heavy, you may well bear it, in expectation of the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge will then give you. If the world do despise you, and treat you with the utmost contempt, regard it not: the day cometh wherein you shall sit with Christ in his throne. Be not discouraged by reason of manifold temptations: but resist the devil, in confidence of a full and complete victory; for you shall judge the tempter at last. Though you have had wrestling now with the body of sin and death, yet ye shall get all your enemies under your feet at length, and be presented faultless before the presence of his glory. Let not the terror of that day dispirit you when you think upon it: let those who have slighted the Judge, and continue enemies to him and to the way of holiness, droop and hang down their heads when they think of his coming; but lift ye up your heads with joy, for the last day will be your best day. The Judge is your Head and Husband, your Redeemer and your Advocate. Ye must appear before the judgment-seat, but ye shall not come into condemnation. His coming will not be against you,

but for you. He came in the flesh, to remove the lawful impediments of the spiritual marriage by his death: he came in the gospel to you, to espouse you to himself: he will come at the last day to solemnize the marriage, and take the bride home to his Father's house. "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

USE II.—Of terror to all unbelievers. This may serve to awaken a secure generation; a world lying in wickedness, as if they were never to be called to an account for it; and slighting the Mediator, as if he were not to judge them. Ah! how few have the lively impressions of the judgment to come! Most men live as if what is said of it from the word were but idle tales. The profane lives of many speak the thoughts of it to be far from their hearts, and in very deed make a mock of it before the world, saying in effect, "Where is the promise of his coming?" The hypocrisy of others, who blind the eyes of the world with a splendid profession, being in appearance Christ's sheep, while they are indeed the devil's goats, is an evidence, that the great separation of the sheep from the goats, is very little laid to heart. How do many indulge themselves in secret wickedness, of which they would be ashamed before witnesses; not considering, that their most secret thoughts and actions will at that day be discovered before the great congregation! How eagerly are men's hearts set on the world, as if it were to be their everlasting habitation! the solemn assemblies, and public ordinances, wherein the Judge is upon a transaction of peace with the criminals, are undervalued: men's hearts will swim like feathers in the waters of the sanctuary, that will sink like stones to

the bottom in cares of this life: they will be very serious in trifles of this world, and trifle in the most serious and weighty things of another world. But O! consider the day that is approaching, in which Christ shall come to judgment: the world shall be summoned, by the sound of the last trumpet, to appear before his tribunal. The Judge shall sit on his throne, and all nations shall be sisted before him: the separation shall be made betwixt the godly and the wicked, the books opened, and the dead judged out of them: one party shall be adjudged to everlasting life, and the other to everlasting fire, according to their works.

It would be a sight of admirable curiosity, if thou couldst wrap up thyself in some dark cloud, or hide thyself in the cleft of some high rock, from whence thou mightest espy wicked kings, princes, judges, and great ones of the earth rising out of their marble tombs, and brought to the bar, to answer for all their cruelty, injustice, oppression, and profanity, without any marks of distinction, but what their wickedness puts upon them: profane, unholy, and unfaithful ministers, pursued with the curses of the ruined people, from their graves to the judgment-seat, and charged with the blood of souls, to whom they gave not faithful warning: mighty men standing trembling before the Judge, unable to recover their wonted boldness, to outwit him with their subtleties, or defend themselves by their strength: delicate women cast forth of their graves, as abominable branches, dragged to the tribunal, to answer for their ungodly lives: the ignorant suddenly taught in the law to their cost: and the learned declared, before

the world, fools and laborious triflers: the atheist convinced, the hypocrite unmasked, and the profane at long-run turned serious about his eternal state; secret murders, adulteries, thefts, cheats, and other works of darkness, which scorned all human search, discovered and laid open before the world, with their most minute circumstances: no regard had to the rich, no pity shown to the poor: oppressed and despised piety set on high; and prosperous wickedness at last brought low: all, not found in Christ, arraigned, convicted, and condemned without respect of persons, and driven from the tribunal to the pit; while those found in him, at that day, being absolved before the world, go with him into heaven. Nay, but thou canst not so escape. Thyself, whosoever thou art, not being in Christ, must bear a part in this tragical and frightful action.

Sinner, that same Lord Christ, whom thou now despisest, whom thou woundest through the sides of his messengers, and before whom thou dost prefer thy lusts, will be thy Judge. And a neglected Saviour will be a severe Judge. O! what mountain, what rock wilt thou get to fall on thee, and hide thee from the face of him who sitteth on the throne? Thou hast now a rock within thee, a heart of adamant, so that thou canst count the darts of the word as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of the spear: but that rock will rent at the sight of the Judge; that hard heart will then break, and thou shalt weep and wail, when weeping and wailing will be to no purpose. How will these cursed eyes abide the sight of the Judge! "Behold, he cometh!" Where is the profane swearer who tore his wounds? the

wretched worldling, now abandoned of his god? the formal hypocrite, who kissed him and betrayed him? the despiser of the gospel, who sent him away in his messengers groaning, profaned his ordinances, and trampled under foot his precious blood? O murderer, the slain man is thy Judge: there is he whom thou didst so maltreat: behold the neglected Lamb of God appearing as a lion against thee! How will thine heart endure the darts of his fiery looks? Arrows of wrath shall pierce, where arrows of conviction cannot enter now. What wilt thou answer him, when he riseth up, and chargeth thee with thy unbelief and impenitency? Wilt thou say, thou wast not warned? Conscience within thee will give thee the lie: the secret groans and weariness of those who warned thee, will witness the contrary. If a child or a fool did tell you, that your house were on fire, you would immediately run to quench it; but, in matters of eternal concern, men will first fill their hearts with prejudices against the messengers, and then cast their message behind their backs. But these silly shifts and pretences will not avail in the day of the Lord. How will these cursed ears, now deaf to the call of the gospel, inviting sinners to come to Christ, hear the fearful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" No sleepy hearer shall be there: no man's heart will then wander: their hearts and eyes will then be fixed on their misery, which they will not now believe. "O that we knew in this our day the things that belong to our peace."

Lastly, Be exhorted to believe this great truth: and believe it so as you may prepare for the judg-

ment betimes. Set up a secret tribunal in your own breasts, and often call yourselves to an account there. Make the Judge your friend in time, by closing with him in the offer of the gospel; and give all diligence, that ye may be found in Christ at that day. Cast off the works of darkness; and live, as believing you are, at all times, and in all places, under the eye of your Judge, who will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. Be fruitful in good works, knowing that as ye sow ye shall reap. Study piety towards God, righteousness and charity towards men. Lay up in store plenty of works of charity and mercy towards them who are in distress, especially such as are of the household of faith, that they may be produced that day as evidences that ye belong to Christ. Shut not up your bowels of mercy now towards the needy, lest ye then find no mercy. Take heed, that in all your works ye be single and sincere; aiming in them all at the glory of your Lord, a testimony of your love to him, and obedience to his command. Leave it to hypocrites, who have their reward, to proclaim every man his own goodness, and to sound a trumpet when they do their alms. It is a base and unchristian spirit, which cannot have satisfaction in a good work unless it be exposed to the view of others: it is utterly unworthy of one who believes that the last trumpet shall call together the whole world; before whom the Judge himself shall publish works truly good, how secretly soever they were done. Live in a believing expectation of the coming of the Lord. Let your loins be always girt, and your lamps burning: so when he comes, whether in the last day of your

life, or in the last day of the world, you shall be able to say with joy, “Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for him.”

HEAD V.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

MATTHEW xxv. 34.

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

HAVING from this portion of Scripture, of which the text is a part, discoursed of the general judgment; and being to speak of the everlasting happiness of the saints, and the everlasting misery of the wicked, from the respective sentences to be pronounced upon them in the great day; I shall take them in the order wherein they lie before us; the rather that, as sentence is first passed upon the righteous, so the execution thereof is first begun, though possibly the other may be fully executed before it be completed.

The words of the text contain the joyful sentence itself, together with an historical introduction thereto, which gives us an account of the Judge pronouncing the sentence; the King, Jesus Christ; the parties on whom it is given, them on his right hand; and the time when, as soon as the trial is over. Of these I have spoken already. It is the sentence itself we

are now to consider: "Come, ye blessed of my Father," &c. Stand a-back, O ye profane goats; have away, all unregenerate souls, not united to Christ: this is not for you. Come, O ye saints, brought out of your natural state, into the state of grace: behold here the state of glory awaiting you.

This glorious sentence bears two things: First, The complete happiness to which the saints are adjudged, the kingdom. Secondly, Their solemn admission to it: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit," &c. First, Their complete happiness is a kingdom. A kingdom is the top of worldly felicity; there is nothing on earth greater than a kingdom: therefore, the hidden weight of glory in heaven is held forth to us under that notion. But it is not an ordinary kingdom, it is the kingdom of heaven, surpassing all the kingdoms of the earth in glory, honour, profit, and pleasure. Secondly, There is a solemn admission of the saints into this their kingdom: "Come ye, inherit the kingdom." In the view of angels, men, and devils, they are invested with royalty, and solemnly inaugurated before the whole world, by Jesus Christ the heir of all things, who hath all power in heaven and in earth. Their right to the kingdom is solemnly recognized and owned! They are admitted to it, as undoubted heirs of the kingdom, to possess it by inheritance. And because this kingdom is the Father's kingdom, therefore they are openly acknowledged in their admission to it, to be the blessed of Christ's Father; the which blessing was given them long before this sentence, but is now solemnly recognized and confirmed to them by the Mediator, in his Father's name. It is observable,

he says not, ye blessed of *the* Father, but ye blessed of *my* Father; to show us, that all blessings are derived upon us from the Father, the fountain of blessing, as he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we are blessed. And, finally, they are admitted to this kingdom as that which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, in God's eternal purpose, before they, or any of them were, that all the world may see eternal life to be the free gift of God.

DOCTRINE—*The saints shall be made completely happy in the possession of the kingdom of heaven.*

Two things I shall here inquire into: FIRST, The nature of this kingdom. SECONDLY, The admission of the saints thereto. And then, LASTLY, I shall make some practical improvement upon the whole.

FIRST, As to the nature of the kingdom of heaven, our knowledge of it is very imperfect; for "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." As, by familiar resemblances, parents instruct their little children concerning things of which otherwise they can have no tolerable notion; so our gracious God, in contemplation of our weakness, is pleased to represent to us heaven's happiness, under similitudes taken from earthly things, glorious in the eyes of men; since naked discoveries of the heavenly glory, divested of earthly resemblances, would be too bright for our weak eyes, and in them we would but lose ourselves. Wherefore now, one cannot but

speak as a child of these things, which the day will fully discover.

The state of glory is represented under the notion of a kingdom; a kingdom among men, being that in which the greatest number of earthly good things doth centre. Now, every saint shall, as a king, inherit a kingdom. All Christ's subjects shall be kings, each one with his crown upon his head. Not that the great King shall divest himself of his royalty, but he will make all his children partakers of his kingdom.

I. The saints shall have kingly power and authority given them. The dominion of the saints will be a dominion far exceeding that of the greatest monarch ever was on earth. They will be absolute masters over sin, that some time had the dominion over them. They will have a complete rule over their own spirits; an entire management of all their affections and inclinations, which now create them so much molestation: the turbulent root of corrupt affections shall be for ever expelled out of that kingdom, and never be able any more to give them the least disturbance. Satan shall be bruised under their feet. He shall never be able to fasten a temptation on them any more: but he will be judged by them; and, in their sight, cast with the reprobate crew into the lake of fire and brimstone.

II. They shall have the ensigns of royalty. For a throne, Christ will grant them to sit with him in his throne. They will be advanced to the highest honour and dignity they are capable of; and, in the enjoyment of it, they will have an eternal undisturbed repose, after all the tossings they meet with

in the world, in their way to the throne. For a crown, they shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Not a crown of gold, but a crown of glory. A crown of glory is a crown of life, that life which knows no end: a crown which death can never make to fall off one's head. It must be an abiding crown, for it is a crown of righteousness. It was purchased for them by Christ's righteousness, which is imputed to them: they are qualified for it by inherent righteousness; God's righteousness or faithfulness secures it to them.

The Lord is pleased often to represent unto us the glorious state of the saints, under the notion of their being clothed in white garments. It is promised to the overcomer that he shall be "clothed in white raiment." The elders about the throne are "clothed in white raiment." The multitude before the throne are "clothed with white robes—arrayed in white robes—made white in the blood of the Lamb." I own the last two testimonies adduced do respect the state of the saints on earth; but withal the terms are borrowed from the state of the church in heaven. But if we consider on what occasions white garments were wont to be put on, we shall find much of heaven under them.

1. The Romans, when they manumitted their bond-servants, gave them a white garment as a badge of their freedom. So shall the saints that day get on their white robes: "for it is the day of the glorious liberty of the children of God—the day of the redemption of their body." If we compare the state of the saints on earth with that of the wicked, it is indeed a state of freedom; whereas the other is a

state of slavery: but, in comparison with their state in heaven, it is but a servitude. A saint on earth is indeed a young prince, and heir to the crown; but his motto may be, 'I serve;' for he "differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." But from the day the saints come to the crown, they receive their complete freedom, and serve no more. They shall be fully freed from sin, which of all evils is the worst, both in itself, and in their apprehension too. They shall be free from all temptation to sin: Satan can have no access to tempt them any more by himself, nor by his agents. A full answer will then be given to that petition they have so often repeated, "Lead us not into temptation." Nay, they shall be set beyond the possibility of sinning, for they shall be confirmed in goodness. It will be the consummate freedom of their will, to be for ever unalterably determined to good. And they shall be freed from all the effects of sin: "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." All reproaches shall be wiped off, and never shall a tear drop any more from their eyes. They shall not complain of desertions again: the Lord will never hide his face from them; but the Sun of Righteousness, shining upon them in his meridian brightness, will dispel all clouds, and give them an everlasting day, without the least mixture of darkness.

2. White raiment hath been a token of purity. Therefore the Lamb's wife is "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." And those who stood before the throne "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The saints shall then put on the robes of perfect purity, and shine in

spotless holiness, like the sun in his strength, without the least cloud to intercept his light. Absolute innocence shall then be restored, and every appearance of sin banished far from this kingdom. The guilt of sin, and the reigning power of it, are now taken away in the saints; nevertheless, “sin dwelleth in them.” But then it shall be no more in them; the corrupt nature will be quite removed; that root of bitterness will be plucked up, and no vestiges of it left in their souls: their nature shall be altogether pure and sinless. There shall be no darkness in their minds; but the understanding of every saint, when he is come to his kingdom, will be as a globe of pure and unmixed light. There shall not be the least aversion to good, or inclination to evil, in their wills: but they will be brought to a perfect conformity to the will of God; blessed with angelical purity, and fixed therein. Their affections shall not be liable to the least disorder or irregularity; it will cost them no trouble to keep them right; they will get such a set of purity as they can never lose. They will be so refined from all earthly dross, as never to savour more of any thing but heaven. Were it possible they should be set again amidst the ensnaring objects of an evil world, they should walk among them without the least defilement. Their graces shall then be perfected, and all the imperfections now cleaving to them done away. There will be no more ground for complaints of weakness of grace; none in that kingdom shall complain of an ill heart, or a corrupt nature. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but—when he shall appear, we shall be like him.”

3. Among the Jews, those who desired to be admitted into the priestly office, being tried, and found to be of the priests' line, and without blemish, were clothed in white, and enrolled among the priests. This seems to be alluded to: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life." So the saints shall not be kings only, but priests withal; for they are "a royal priesthood." They will be priests upon their thrones. They are judicially found descended from the great High Priest of their profession, begotten of him by his Spirit, of the incorruptible seed of the word, and without blemish: so, their trial being over, they are admitted to be priests in the temple above, that they may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. There is nothing upon earth more glorious than a kingdom, nothing more venerable than the priesthood; and both meet together in the glorified state of the saints. The general assembly of the first-born, whose is the priesthood and the double portion, appearing in their white robes of glory, will be a glorious company. That day will show them to be the persons whom the Lord has chosen out of all the tribes of the earth, to be near unto him, and to enter into his temple, even into his holy place. Their priesthood, begun on earth, shall be brought to its perfection, while they shall be employed in offering the sacrifice of praise to God and the Lamb for ever and ever. They got not their portion in the earth with the rest of the tribes; but the Lord himself was their portion, and will be their double portion through the ages of eternity.

4. They were wont to wear white raiment in a

time of triumph ; to the which also there seems to be an allusion : “ He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.” And what is heaven but an everlasting triumph ? None get thither but such as fight, and overcome too. Though Canaan was given to the Israelites as an inheritance, they behoved to conquer it ere they could be possessors of it. The saints, in this world, are in the field of battle ; often in red garments, garments rolled in blood : but the day approacheth in which they shall stand “ before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,” having obtained a complete victory over all their enemies.

Behold the joy and peace of the saints in their white robes ! The more difficulties the saints have passed through in their way to heaven, the place will be sweeter to them when they come to it. Every happy stroke struck in the spiritual warfare, will be a jewel in their crown of glory. Each victory obtained against sin, Satan, and the world, will raise their triumphant joy the higher. The remembrance of the cross will sweeten the crown ; and the memory of their travel through the wilderness will put an additional verdure on the fields of glory, while they walk through them, minding the day when they went mourning without the sun.

And now, that they appear triumphant in white robes, it is a sign they have obtained an honourable peace ; such a peace as their enemies can disturb no more. So every thing peculiarly adapted to their militant condition is laid aside. Public ordinances, preaching, sacraments, shall be honourably laid aside :

“there is no temple there.” Praying shall then be turned to praising; and, there being no sin to confess, no wants to seek the supply of, confession and petition shall be swallowed up in everlasting thanksgiving. There will be no mourning in heaven: they have sown in tears, the reaping time of joy is come; “and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” No need of mortification there; and self-examination is then at an end. They will not need to watch any more; the danger is over. Patience has had its perfect work, and there is no use for it there. Faith is turned into sight, and hope is swallowed up in the ocean of sensible and full enjoyment.

Lastly, White garments were worn on festival days, in token of joy. And so shall the saints be clothed in white raiment; for they shall keep an everlasting Sabbath to the Lord: “There remaineth therefore a rest (or keeping of a Sabbath) to the people of God.” The Sabbath, in the esteem of saints, is the queen of days: and they shall have an endless sabbatism in the kingdom of heaven; so shall their garments be always white. They will have an eternal rest, with an uninterrupted joy; for heaven is not a resting-place, where men may sleep out an eternity, (there they rest not day nor night); but their work is their rest and continual recreation, and toil and weariness have no place there. They rest there in God, who is the centre of their souls. Here they find the complement or satisfaction of all their desires; having the full enjoyment of God, and uninterrupted communion with him. This is the point, unto the which till the soul come it will always be restless; but that point reached, it rests; for he is

the last end, and the soul can go no farther. It cannot understand, will, nor desire more ; but in him it has what is commensurable to its boundless desires. This is the happy end of all the labours of the saints : their toil and sorrow issue in a joyful rest. The wicked begin with a day of rest and pleasure, but end with a night of everlasting toil and sorrow ; but God's people have their gloomy night first, and then comes their day of eternal rest. The which Abraham, in the parable, observed to the rich man in hell : “ Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”

III. If one inquires where the kingdom of the saints lies? It is not in this world : it lies in “ a better country, that is an heavenly ;” a country better than the best of this world, namely, the heavenly Canaan, Emmanuel's land, where nothing is wanting to complete the happiness of the inhabitants. That land enjoys an everlasting day ; “ for there is no night there.” An eternal sunshine beautifies this better country ; but there is no scorching heat there. No clouds shall be seen there for ever ; yet it is not a land of drought : the trees of the Lord's planting are set by the rivers of water, and shall never want moisture, for they will have an eternal supply of the Spirit, by Jesus Christ, from his Father. This is the country from whence our Lord came, and whither he is gone again ; the country which all the holy patriarchs and prophets had their eye upon while on earth, and which all the saints who have gone before us have fought their way to, and unto which the

martyrs have joyfully swimmèd through a sea of blood. This earth is the place of the saints' pilgrimage; that is their country, where they find their everlasting rest.

IV. The royal city is that great city, the holy Jerusalem. The saints shall reign in that city, whose wall is of jasper, and the foundations of the walls garnished with all manner of precious stones, and the street of pure gold; so that their feet shall be set on that which the men of this world set their hearts upon. This is the city God has prepared for them; a city that hath foundations, a continuing city, which shall stand and flourish when all the cities of the world are laid in ashes, and which shall not be moved when the foundations of the world are overturned. It is a city that never changeth its inhabitants: none of them shall ever be removed out of it; for life and immortality reign there, and no death can enter into it. It is blessed with a perfect and perpetual peace, and can never be in the least disturbed. Nothing from without can annoy it; the gates therefore are not shut at all by day, and there is no night there. There can nothing from within trouble it. Whatever contentions are amongst the saints now, no vestige of their former jarrings shall remain there. Love to God and to one another shall be perfected; and those of them who stood at greatest distance here, will joyfully embrace and delight in one another there.

V. The royal palace is Christ's Father's house, in which are many mansions. There shall the saints dwell for ever. That is the house prepared for all the heirs of glory, even those of them who dwell in

the meanest cottage now, or have not where to lay their heads. As our Lord calls his saints to a kingdom, he will provide them a house suitable to the dignity he puts upon them. The saints were by nature utterly unfit for this house. But the Father gives the designed inhabitants to the Son, to be by him redeemed: the Son pays the price of their redemption, even his own precious blood; that, with the allowance of justice, they may have access to the house: and the Holy Spirit sanctifies them by his grace, that they may be meet to come in thither, where no unclean thing can enter. And no wonder, for it is the King's palace they enter into; the house of the kingdom, where the great King keeps his court, where he has set his throne, and shows forth his glory in a singular manner, beyond what mortals can conceive.

VI. Paradise is their palace garden: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," said our Saviour to the penitent thief on the cross. Heaven is a paradise for pleasure and delight, where there is both wood and water: "A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb—and on either side of the river the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields her fruit every month." How happy might innocent Adam have been in the earthly paradise, where there was nothing wanting for necessity nor delight! Eden was the most pleasant spot of the uncorrupted earth, and paradise the most pleasant spot of Eden: but what is earth in comparison of heaven? The glorified saints are advanced to the heavenly paradise. There they shall not only

see, but “eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” They shall behold the Mediator’s glory, and be satisfied with his goodness. No flaming sword will be there, to keep the way of that tree of life; but they shall freely eat of it, and live for ever. And they shall drink of the river of pleasures, those sweetest and purest pleasures, the which Emmanuel’s land doth afford.

VII. They shall have royal treasures, sufficient to support the dignity they are advanced to. Since the street of the royal city is pure gold, and the twelve gates thereof are twelve pearls; their treasure must be of that which is better than gold or pearl. It is “an eternal weight of glory.” O precious treasure! a treasure not liable to insensible corruption by moths or rust; a treasure which none can steal from them. Never did any kingdom afford such a precious treasure, nor a treasure of such variety: for “he that overcometh shall inherit all things.” This then is the peculiar treasure of those kings who inherit the kingdom of heaven. Now they are rich in hope: but then they will have their riches in hand. Now all things are theirs in respect of right: then all shall be theirs in possession. They may go for ever through Emmanuel’s land, and behold the glory and riches thereof, with the satisfying thought, that all they see is their own. It is a pity those should ever be uneasy under the want of earthly good things, who may be sure they shall inherit all things at length.

VIII. Although there is no material temple therein, no mediate serving of God in the use of ordinances, as here on earth; yet, as for this kingdom,

“The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” As the temple was the glory of Canaan, so will the celestial temple be the glory of heaven. The saints shall be brought in thither as a royal priesthood, to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever; for Jesus Christ will then make every saint “a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall go no more out.” There the saints shall have the cloud of glory, the divine presence, with most intimate and uninterrupted communion with God. This leads me more particularly to consider,

IX. The society in this kingdom. What would royal power and authority, ensigns of royalty, richest treasures, and all other advantages of a kingdom, avail, without comfortable society? Some crowned heads have had but a sorry life through the want of it: their palaces have been but unto them as prisons, and their badges of honour, as chains on a prisoner: while hated of all, they had none they could trust in, or whom they could have comfortable fellowship with. But the chief part of heaven’s happiness lies in the blessed society the saints shall have there. For clearing of which, consider these few things:—

1. The society of the saints among themselves, will be no small part of heaven’s happiness. The communion of saints on earth is highly prized by all those who are travelling through the world unto Zion: and companions in sin can never have such true pleasure and delight in one another, as sometimes the Lord’s people have in praying together, and conversing about those things which the world is a stranger to. Here the saints are but few in company at best: and some of them are so posted,

as that they seem to themselves to dwell alone; having no access to such as they would freely unbosom themselves to in the matter of their spiritual case. They sigh and say, “Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits—there is no cluster to eat—the good man is perished out of the earth.” But in “the general assembly of the first born” in heaven, none of all the saints, who ever were, or will be on the earth, shall be amissing. They will be all of them together in one place, all possess one kingdom, and all sit down together to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Here the best of the saints want not their sinful imperfections, making their society less comfortable: but there they shall be perfect, without “spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

There we will see Adam and Eve in the heavenly paradise, freely eating of the tree of life; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the holy patriarchs, no more wandering from land to land, but come to their everlasting rest; all the prophets feeding their eyes on the glory of him, of whose coming they prophesied; the twelve apostles of the Lamb, sitting on their twelve thrones; all the holy martyrs in their long white robes, with their crowns on their heads; the godly kings advanced to a kingdom which cannot be moved; and them that turn many to righteousness, shining as the stars for ever and ever. There will we see our godly friends, relations, and acquaintances, pillars in the temple of God, to go no more out from us. And it is more than probable that the saints will know one another in heaven; that, at least, they will know their friends, relatives, and those they

were acquainted with on earth, and such as have been most eminent in the church. This seems to be included in that perfection of happiness to which the saints shall be advanced there. If Adam knew who and what Eve was at first sight, when the Lord God brought her to him, why should one question, but husbands and wives, parents and children, will know each other in glory? If the Thessalonians, converted by Paul's ministry, shall be his "crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming," why may not one conclude, that ministers shall know their people, and people their ministers in heaven? And if the disciples, on the mount of transfiguration, knew Moses and Elias, whom they had never seen before, we have ground to think we shall know them too, and such as they, when we come to heaven. The communion of saints shall be most intimate there: "they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Lazarus "was carried by the angels unto Abraham's bosom," which denotes most intimate and familiar society.

2. The saints will have the society of all the holy angels there. An innumerable company of angels shall be companions to them in their glorified state. Happy were the shepherds who heard the song of the heavenly host when Christ was born! But thrice happy they who shall join their voices to theirs in the choir of saints and angels in heaven, when he shall be glorified in all who shall be about him there! Then shall we be brought acquainted with those blessed spirits who never sinned. How bright will those morning stars shine in the holy

place ! They were ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, loved them for their Lord and Master's sake, encamped round about them to preserve them from danger : how joyfully will they welcome them to their everlasting habitations, and rejoice to see them come at length to their kingdom ! The saints shall be no more afraid of them, as some time they were wont to be ; they shall then have put off mortality, and infirmities of the flesh, and be themselves as the angels of God, fit to entertain communion and fellowship with these shining ones. And both being brought under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall join in the praises of God and of the Lamb, " saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

Lastly, They shall have society with the Lord himself in heaven, glorious communion with God and Christ, which is the perfection of happiness. I choose to speak of communion with God, and the man Christ together : because, as we derive our grace from the Lamb, so we will derive our glory from him too ; the man Christ being (if I may be allowed the expression) the centre of the divine glory in heaven, from whence it is diffused to all the saints. This seems to be taught us by those scriptures, which express heaven's happiness by " being with Christ : " " This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." " Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me, (and remarkable to this purpose is what follows,) that they may behold my glory." " So shall we ever be with the Lord," to wit, the Lord Christ, whom we shall meet in the air. This also seems to be the import of those scriptures, wherein

God and the Lamb, the slain Saviour, are jointly spoken of, in point of the happiness of the saints in heaven: “For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them.” Here lies the chief happiness of the saints in heaven, that without which they could never be happy, though lodged in that glorious place, and blessed with the society of angels there. What I will venture to say of it shall be comprised in three things:—

1. The saints in heaven shall have the glorious presence of God and of the Lamb: “God himself shall be with them,” and they “shall ever be with the Lord.” God is every where present in respect of his essence; the saints militant have his special gracious presence: but in heaven they have his glorious presence. There they are brought near to the throne of the great King, and stand before him, where he shows his inconceivable glory. There they have the tabernacle of God, on which the cloud of glory rests: the all-glorious human nature of Christ, wherein the fulness of the Godhead dwells; not veiled, as in the days of his humiliation, but shining through that blessed flesh, (that all the saints may behold his glory,) and making that body more glorious than a thousand suns: so that the city has no need of the sun, nor of the moon, but “the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Who can conceive the happiness of the saints in the presence-chamber of the great King, where he sits in his chair of state, making his glory eminently

to appear in the man Christ? His gracious presence makes a mighty change upon the saints in this world: his glorious presence in heaven, then, must needs elevate their graces to their perfection, and elevate their capacities. The saints do experience that the presence of God, now with them in his grace, can make a little heaven of a sort of hell: how great then must the glory of heaven be by his presence there in his glory! If a candle, in some sort, beautifies a cottage or prison, how will the shining sun beautify a palace or paradise! The gracious presence of God made a wilderness lightsome to Moses, the valley of the shadow of death to David, a fiery furnace to the three children: what a ravishing beauty shall then arise from the Sun of Righteousness shining in his meridian brightness on the street of the city laid with pure gold! This glorious presence of God in heaven will put a glory on the saints themselves. The pleasantest garden hath no beauty when the darkness of the night sits down on it; but the shining sun puts a glory on the blackest mountains: so those who are now as bottles in the smoke, when set in the glorious presence of God, will be glorious both in soul and body.

2. The saints in heaven shall have the full enjoyment of God and of the Lamb. This is it that perfectly satisfies the rational creature; and here is the saints' everlasting rest. This will make up all their wants, and fill the desires of their souls, which, after all here obtained, still cry, *Give, give*, not without some anxiety; because though they do enjoy God, yet they do not enjoy him fully. As to the way and manner of this enjoyment, our Lord tells us,

“ This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” Now, there are two ways how a desirable object is known most perfectly and satisfyingly; the one is by sight, the other by experience: sight satisfies the understanding, and experience satisfies the will. Accordingly one may say, that the saints enjoy God and the Lamb in heaven, (1.) By an intuitive knowledge; (2.) By an experimental knowledge: both of them perfect, I mean in respect of the capacity of the creature; for otherwise a creature’s perfect knowledge of an infinite being is impossible. The saints below enjoy God, in that knowledge they have of him by report from his holy word, which they believe: they see him likewise darkly in the glass of ordinances: they have also some experimental knowledge of him, they taste that God is good, and that the Lord is gracious. But the saints above shall not need a good report of the King, they shall see himself; therefore faith ceaseth: they will behold his own face; therefore ordinances are no more: there is no need of a glass: they shall drink, and drink abundantly of that whereof they have tasted: and so hope ceaseth, for they are at the utmost bounds of their desires.

1. The saints in heaven shall enjoy God and the Lamb by sight, and that in a most perfect manner: “ For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face.” Here our sight is but mediate, as by a glass, in which we see not things themselves, but the images of things: but there we shall have an immediate view of God and the Lamb. Here our knowledge is but obscure; there it shall be clear,

without the least mixture of darkness. There is a veil now on the glorious face, as to us; but when they come to the upper house, that veil, through which some rays of beauty are now darted, will be found entirely taken off; and then shall glorious excellencies and perfections, not seen in him by mortals, be clearly discovered, for we shall “see his face.” O unspeakable glory! the great King keeps his court in heaven, and the saints shall all be his courtiers, ever near the King’s person, seeing his face. “The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face.”

(1.) They shall see Jesus Christ with their bodily eyes, since he will never lay aside the human nature. They will always behold that glorious blessed body which is personally united to the divine nature, and exalted far above principalities and powers, and every name that is named. The wise men fell down and worshipped him when they saw him a young child, with Mary his mother, in the house. But O what a ravishing sight it will be to see him in his kingdom, on his throne, at the Father’s right hand! “The word was made flesh,” and the glory of God shall shine through that flesh, and the joys of heaven spring out from it unto the saints, who shall see and enjoy God in Christ. For since the union betwixt Christ and the saints is never dissolved, but they continue his members for ever; and the members cannot draw their life but from their head; seeing that which is independent on the head, as to vital influence, is no member: therefore Jesus Christ will remain the everlasting bond of union betwixt God

and the saints, from whence their eternal life shall spring: "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God.—And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Wherefore, the immediate enjoyment of God in heaven is to be understood, in respect of the laying aside of word and sacraments, and such external means as we enjoy God by in this world; but not as if the saints should then cast off their dependence on their Head for vital influences: nay, "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters."

Now, when we shall behold him who died for us, that we might live for evermore—what entertainment he had in the upper house; what hallelujahs of angels could not hinder him to hear the groans of a perishing multitude on earth, and to come down for their help; and what a glory he laid aside for us—then will we be more "able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." When the saints shall remember, that they have got the cup of salvation in exchange for the cup of wrath his Father gave him to drink, which his sinless human nature shivered at; how will their hearts leap within them, burn with seraphic love, like coals of juniper, and the arch of heaven ring with their songs of salvation! The Jews, celebrating the feast of tabernacles, (which was

the most joyful of all their feasts, and lasted seven days,) went once every day about the altar, singing hosanna, with their myrtle, palm, and willow-branches in their hands, (the two former signs of victory, the last of chastity,) in the mean time bending their boughs towards the altar. When the saints are presented, as a chaste virgin to Christ, and, as conquerors, have got their palms in their hands, how joyfully will they compass the altar evermore, and sing their hosannas, or rather their hallelujahs about it, bending their palms toward it, acknowledging themselves to owe all unto the Lamb that was slain, and redeemed them with his blood! And to this agrees what John saw. “A great multitude—stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

(2.) They shall see God. They will be happy in seeing the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, (not with their bodily eyes, in respect of which God is invisible,) but with the eyes of their understanding; being blessed with the most perfect, full, and clear knowledge of God and divine things, which the creature is capable of. This is called the beatific vision, and is the perfection of the understanding, the utmost term thereof. It is but an obscure delineation of the glory of God, that mortals can have on earth; a sight, as it were, of his back parts, *Exod. xxxiii. 23.* But there they will see his face, *Rev. xxii. 4.* They shall see him in the fulness of his glory, and behold him fixedly: whereas it is but a passing view they can have of him here. There the saints shall eter-

nally, without interruption, feed their eyes upon him, and be ever viewing his glorious perfections. And as their bodily eyes shall be strengthened and fitted to behold the glorious majesty of the man Christ, (as eagles gaze on the sun without being blinded thereby,) so their minds shall have such an elevation as will fit them to see God in his glory; their capacities shall be enlarged, according to the measure in which he shall be pleased to communicate himself unto them for their complete happiness.

This blissful sight of God, being quite above our present capacities, we must needs be much in the dark about it. But it seems to be something else than the sight of that glory, which we will see with our bodily eyes, in the saints and in the man Christ, or any other splendour or refulgence from the Godhead whatsoever: for no created thing can be our chief good and happiness, nor fully satisfy our souls; and it is plain that these things are somewhat different from God himself. Therefore I conceive, that the souls of the saints shall see God himself: so the Scriptures teach us, that we shall "see face to face, and know even as we are known," and that "we shall see him as he is." Howbeit the saints can never have an adequate conception of God: they cannot comprehend that which is infinite. They cannot, with one glance of their eye, behold what grows on every side; but the divine perfections will be an unbounded field, in which the glorified shall walk eternally, seeing more and more of God; since they can never come to the end of that which is infinite. What a ravishing sight would it be, to see all the perfections, and lovely qualities, that are

scattered here and there among the creatures, gathered together into one ! but even such a sight would be infinitely below this blissful sight the saints shall have in heaven. For they shall see God, in whom all these perfections shall eminently appear, with infinitely more ; whereof there is no vestige to be found in the creatures. In him shall they see every thing desirable, and nothing but what is desirable.

Then shall they be perfectly satisfied as to the love of God towards them, which they are now ready to question on every turn. They will be no more set to persuade themselves of it, by marks, signs, and testimonies : they will have an intuitive knowledge of it. They shall (with the profoundest reverence be it spoken) look into the heart of God, and there see the love he bore to them from all eternity, and the love and good-will he will bear to them for evermore. The glorified shall have a most clear and distinct understanding of divine truths, for in his light we shall see light. The light of glory will be a complete commentary on the Bible, and loose all the hard and knotty questions in divinity. There is no joy on earth comparable to that which ariseth from the discovery of truth ; no discovery of truth comparable to the discovery of Scripture truth, made by the Spirit of the Lord unto the soul : “ I rejoice at thy word,” says the Psalmist, “ as one that findeth great spoil.” Yet it is but an imperfect discovery we have of it while here. How ravishing then will it be, to see the opening of the whole treasure hid in that field ! They shall also be let into the understanding of the works of God. The beauty of the

works of creation and providence will then be set in a due light. Natural knowledge will be brought to perfection by the light of glory. The web of providence, concerning the church, and all men whatsoever, will then be laid before the eyes of the saints: and it will appear a most beautiful mixture; so as they shall all say together, on the view of it, "He hath done all things well." But, in a special manner, the work of redemption shall be the eternal wonder of the saints, and they will admire and praise the glorious contrivance for ever. Then shall they get a full view of its suitableness to the divine perfections, and to the case of sinners; and clearly read the covenant that passed betwixt the Father and the Son, from all eternity, touching their salvation. They shall for ever wonder and praise, and praise and wonder, at the mysteries of wisdom and love, goodness and holiness, mercy and justice, appearing in the glorious device. Their souls shall be eternally satisfied with the sight of God himself, and of their election by the Father, their redemption by the Son, and application thereof to them by the Holy Spirit.

2. The saints in heaven shall enjoy God in Christ by experimental knowledge, which is, when the object itself is given and possessed. This is the participation of the divine goodness in full measure; which is the perfection of the will, and utmost term thereof: "The Lamb shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." These are no other but God himself, the fountain of living waters, who will fully and freely communicate himself unto them. He will pour out of his goodness eternally into their

souls: and then shall they have a most lively sensation, in the innermost part of their souls, of all that goodness they heard of, and believed to be in him, and of what they see in him by the light of glory. This will be an everlasting practical exposition of that word, which men and angels cannot sufficiently unfold, to wit, "God himself shall—be their God." God will communicate himself unto them fully: they will no more be set to taste of the streams of divine goodness in ordinances, as they were wont, but shall drink at the fountain-head. And this will be the entertainment of every saint: for though in created things, what is given to one is withheld from another; yet an infinite good can fully communicate itself to all, and fill all. Those who are heirs of God, the great heritage, shall then enter into a full possession of their inheritance: and the Lord will open his treasures of goodness unto them, that their enjoyment may be full. They shall not be stinted to any measure, but the enjoyment shall go as far as their enlarged capacities can reach. As a narrow vessel cannot contain the ocean, so neither can the finite creature comprehend an infinite good: but no measure shall be set to the enjoyment, but what ariseth from the capacity of the creature. So that although there be degrees of glory, yet all shall be filled, and have what they can hold: though some will be capable to hold more than others, there will be no want to any of them—all shall be fully satisfied, and perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of divine goodness, according to their enlarged capacities. The glorified shall have all in God, for the satisfaction of all their desires.

Now they are in part made partakers of the divine nature: but then they shall perfectly partake of it; that is to say, God will communicate to them his own image, make all his goodness not only pass before them, but pass into them, and stamp the image of all his own perfections upon them, so far as the creature is capable to receive the same; from whence shall result a perfect likeness to him in all things, which completes the happiness of the creature. And this is what the Psalmist seems to have had in view: "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness:" the perfection of God's image, following upon the beatific vision. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Hence there shall be a most close and intimate union betwixt God and the saints: God shall be in them, and they in God, in the way of a glorious and most perfect union; for then shall they dwell in love made perfect. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." How will the saints knit with God, and he with them, when he shall see nothing in them but his own image; when their love shall arrive at its perfection, no nature, but the divine nature, being left in them; and all imperfection swallowed up in their glorious transformation into the likeness of God! Their love to the Lord, being purged from the dross of self-love, shall be most pure; so as they will love nothing but God, and in God. It shall be no more faint and languishing, but burn like coals of juniper. It will be a light without darkness, a flaming fire without smoke. As the live-coal, when all the moisture is gone out of it, is all fire; so will the saints be all love, when

they come to the full enjoyment of God in heaven, by intuitive and experimental knowledge of him, by sight and full participation of the divine goodness.

Lastly, From this glorious presence and enjoyment shall arise an unspeakable joy, which the saints shall be filled with: "In thy presence is fulness of joy." The saints sometimes enjoy God in the world, when, their eyes being held that they cannot perceive it, they have not the comfort of the enjoyment: but then, all mistakes being removed, they shall not only enjoy God, but rest in the enjoyment with inexpressible joy and satisfaction. The desire of earthly things breeds torment, and the enjoyment of them often ends in loathing. But though the glorified saints shall ever desire more and more of God, their desires shall not be mixed with the least anxiety, since the fulness of the Godhead stands always open to them; therefore they shall hunger no more, they shall not have the least uneasiness, in their eternal appetite after the hidden manna: they shall never think they have too much; therefore it is added, "neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." The enjoyment of God and the Lamb will be ever fresh and new to them, through the ages of eternity: for they shall drink of living fountains of waters, where new waters are continually springing up in abundance. They shall eat of the tree of life, which, for variety, affords twelve manner of fruits, and these always new and fresh, for it yields every month. Their joy shall be pure and unmixed, without any dregs of sorrow; not slight and momentary, but solid and everlasting, without interruption. They will enter into joy: "Enter thou into the joy of thy

Lord." The presence and enjoyment of God and the Lamb will satisfy us with pleasures for evermore; and the glory of our souls and bodies, arising from thence, will afford us everlasting delight. Happy they who now sow in tears, which shall spring up in joy in heaven, and bow their heads there with a weight of glory upon them!

Thus far of the society in this kingdom of the saints.

X. In the *last* place, The kingdom shall endure for ever. As every thing in it is eternal, so the saints shall have an undoubted certainty and full assurance of the eternal duration of the same. This is a necessary ingredient in perfect happiness: for the least uncertainty, as to the continuance of any good with one, is not without some fear, anxiety, and torment; and therefore is utterly inconsistent with perfect happiness. But the glorified shall never have fear, nor cause of fear of any loss: they shall be ever with the Lord. They shall all attain the full persuasion, that nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God, nor from the full enjoyment of him for ever. The inheritance reserved in heaven is incorruptible; it hath no principle of corruption in itself to make it liable to decay, but endures for evermore; it is undefiled, nothing from without can mar its beauty, nor is there any thing in itself to offend those who enjoy it: and therefore it fadeth not away; but ever remains in its native lustre and primitive beauty.

SECONDLY, Proceed we now to speak of the admission of the saints into this their kingdom; where I shall briefly touch upon two things: I. The for-

mal admission, in the call to them from the Judge to come to their kingdom. II. The quality in which they are admitted and introduced to it.

I. Their admission the text shows to be by a voice from the throne: the King calling to them from the throne, before angels and men, to come to their kingdom. *Come* and *go* are but short words: but they will be such as will afford matter of thought to all mankind through the ages of eternity; since upon the one depends everlasting happiness, and upon the other everlasting misery. Now, our Lord bids the worst of sinners, who hear the gospel, *Come*; but the most part will not come unto him. Some few, whose hearts are touched by his Spirit, do embrace the call, and their souls within them say, "Behold, we come unto thee:" they give themselves to the Lord, forsake the world and their lusts for him; they bear his yoke, and cast it not off, no not in the heat of the day, when the weight of it, perhaps, makes them sweat the blood out of their bodies. Behold the fools! saith the carnal world, whither are they going? But stay a little, O foolish world! From the same mouth, whence they had the call they are now following, another call shall come, which shall make amends for all: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom."

The saints shall find an inexpressible sweetness in this call to *come*. (1.) Hereby Jesus Christ shows his desire of their society in the upper house, that they may be ever with him there. Thus he will open his heart unto them, as sometimes he did to his Father concerning them, saying, "Father, I will that they—be with me where I am." Now the

“ travail of his soul ” stands before the throne, not only the souls, but the bodies he has redeemed ; and they must come, for he must be completely satisfied. (2.) Hereby they are solemnly invited to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. They were invited to the lower table by the voice of the servants, and the secret workings of the Spirit within them ; and they came and did partake of the feast of divine communications in the lower house : but Jesus Christ in person shall invite them, before all the world, to the higher table. (3.) By this he admits them into the mansions of glory. The keys of heaven hang at the girdle of our royal Mediator. All power in heaven is given to him, and none get in thither but whom he admits. When they were living on earth with the rest of the world, he opened the everlasting doors of their hearts, entered into them himself, and shut them again ; so as sin could never re-enter, to reign there as formerly : and now he opens heaven’s door to them, draws his doves into the ark, and shuts them in there ; so as the law, death, and hell, can never get them out again. The saints in this life were still labouring to enter into that rest ; but Satan was always pulling them back, their corruptions always drawing them down : but now Christ gives the word for their admission ; they are brought in, and put beyond all hazard. Lastly, Thus he speaks to them, as the person introducing them into the kingdom, into the presence-chamber of the great King, and unto the throne. Jesus Christ is the great secretary of heaven, whose it is to bring the saints into the gracious presence of God, and to whom alone it belongs to bring them into the glori-

ous presence of God in heaven. Truly heaven would be a strange place to them, if Jesus was not there: but the Son will introduce his brethren into his Father's kingdom; they shall go in "with him to the marriage."

II. Let us consider in what quality they are introduced by him.

1. He brings them in as the blessed of his Father: so runs the call from the throne, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," &c. It is Christ's Father's house they are to come into: therefore he puts them in mind, that they are blessed of his Father; dear to the Father, as well as to himself. This is it that makes heaven home to them, namely, that it is Christ's Father's house, where they may be assured of welcome. He brings them in for his Father's sake, as well as for his own: they are the blessed of his Father; who, as he is the fountain of the Deity, is also the fountain of all blessings conferred on the children of men. They are those to whom God designed well from eternity. They were blessed in the eternal purpose of God, being elected to everlasting life. At the opening of the book of life, their names were found written therein: so that, bringing them to the kingdom, he doth but bring them to what the Father, from all eternity, designed for them; being saved by the Son, they are "saved according to his purpose." They are those to whom the Father hath spoken well. He spake well to them in his word, which must now receive its full accomplishment. They had his promise of the kingdom, lived and died in the faith of it: and now they come to receive the thing promised. Unto them he

has done well. A gift is often in Scripture called a blessing; and God's blessing is ever real, like Isaac's blessing, by which Jacob became his heir: they were all his, by grace justified, sanctified, and made to persevere unto the end; now they are raised up in glory, and being tried, stand in the judgment: what remains then, but that God crown his own work of grace in them, in giving them their kingdom, in the full enjoyment of himself for ever?

2. Christ introduceth them as heirs of the kingdom, to the actual possession of it: "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom." They are the children of God by regeneration and adoption: "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Now is the general assembly of the first-born before the throne: their minority is overpast, and the time appointed of the Father for the receiving of their inheritance is come. The Mediator purchased the inheritance for them with his own blood: their rights and evidences were drawn long ago, and registered in the Bible; nay, they had infestment of their inheritance in the person of Jesus Christ as their proxy, when he ascended into heaven, "whither the Forerunner is for us entered." Nothing remaineth but that they enter into personal possession thereof, which, begun at death, is perfected at the last day; when the saints, in their bodies as well as their souls, go into their kingdom.

Lastly, They are introduced to it as those it was prepared for from the foundation of the world. The kingdom was prepared for them in the eternal purpose of God, before they or any of them had a being; which shows it to be a gift of free grace to

them. It was from eternity the divine purpose, that there should be such a kingdom for the elect; and that all impediments which might mar their access to it should be removed out of the way. And now that the appointed time is come, they are brought in to take their several places in glory, set apart and reserved for them, till they should come to them.

USE.—I shall close my discourse on this subject with a word of application, (1.) To all who claim a right to this kingdom. (2.) To those who have indeed a right to it. (3.) To those who have not a right thereto.

1. Since it is evident there is no promiscuous admission into the kingdom of heaven, and none do obtain it but those whose claim to it is solemnly tried by the great Judge, and, after trial, sustained as good and valid; it is necessary that all of us impartially try and examine, whether, according to the laws of the kingdom, contained in the holy Scriptures, we can verify and make good our claim to this kingdom? The hopes of heaven which most men have, are built on such sandy foundations, as can never abide the trial; having no ground in the word, but in their own deluded fancy: such hopes will leave those who entertain them miserably disappointed at last. Wherefore, it is not only our duty, but our interest, to put the matter to a fair trial in time. If we find we have no right to heaven indeed, we are yet in the way; and what we have not, we may obtain: but if we find we have a right to it, we will then have the comfort of a happy prospect into eternity; which is the greatest comfort one is capable of in the world. If ye inquire, How ye may

know whether ye have a right to heaven or not? I answer, ye must know that by the state ye are now in. If ye are yet in your natural state, ye are children of wrath, and not children of this kingdom; for that state, to them who live and die in it, issues in eternal misery. If you be brought into the state of grace, you have a just claim to the state of glory; for grace will certainly issue in glory at length. This kingdom is an inheritance, which none but the children of God can justly claim. Now, we become the children of God by regeneration and union with Christ his Son; "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." These then are the great points upon which one's evidences for the state of glory do depend.

If you be heirs of glory, the kingdom of God is within you by virtue of your regeneration and union with Christ. (1.) The kingdom of heaven has the throne in thy heart, if thou hast a right to that kingdom. Christ is in thee, and God is in thee; and, having chosen him for thy portion, thy soul has taken up its everlasting rest in him, and gets no kindly rest but in him; as the dove, until she came into the ark. To him the soul habitually inclines, by virtue of the new nature, the divine nature, which the heirs of glory are partakers of: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." (2.) The laws of heaven are in thy heart, if thou art an heir of heaven: "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Thy mind is enlightened in the knowledge of the laws of the kingdom by the Spirit of the Lord, the instructor of all the heirs of glory; for whoever may

want instruction, surely an heir to a crown shall not want it. It is written in the prophets, “ And they shall be all taught of God.” Withal thy heart is changed, and thou bearest God’s image, which consists in “ righteousness and true holiness.” Thy soul is reconciled to the whole law of God, and at war with all known sin. In vain do they pretend to the holy kingdom, who are not holy in heart and life; for “ without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” If heaven is a rest, it is for spiritual labourers, and not for loiterers. If it is an eternal triumph, they are not in the way to it who avoid the spiritual warfare, and are in no care to subdue corruption, resist temptation, and to cut their way to it through the opposition made by the devil, the world, and the flesh.

(3.) The treasure in heaven is the chief in thy esteem and desire; for it is your treasure, and “ where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” If it is not the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen, which thy heart is in greatest care and concern to obtain, thy chief business lies there; it is a sign thy treasure is there, for thy heart is there. Carnal men value themselves most on their treasures upon earth; with them, the things that are not seen are weighed down by the things that are seen, and no losses do so much affect them as earthly losses: but the heirs of the crown of glory will value themselves most on their treasures in heaven, and will not put their private estate in the balance with their kingdom; nor will the loss of the former go so near their hearts as the thoughts of the loss of the latter. Where these first-fruits of heaven are to be found, the eternal weight of glory will surely follow after;

while the want of them must be admitted, according to the word, to be an incontestable evidence of an heir of wrath.

2. Let the heirs of the kingdom behave themselves suitably to their character and dignity. Live as having the faith and hope of this glorious kingdom : let your conversation be in heaven. Let your souls delight in communion with God while ye are on earth, since ye look for your happiness in communion with him in heaven. Let your speech and actions savour of heaven: and, in your manner of life, look like the country to which ye are going; that it may be said of you, as of Gideon's brethren, " Each one resembled the children of a king." Maintain a holy contempt of the world, and of the things of the world. Although others, whose earthly things are their best things, do set their hearts upon them; yet it becomes you to set your feet on them, since your best things are above. This world is but the country through which lies your road to Emmanuel's land; therefore pass through it as pilgrims and strangers, and dip not into the incumbrances of it so as to retard you in your journey. The prize set before you challengeth your utmost zeal, activity, and diligence; and holy courage, resolution, and magnanimity, become those who are to inherit the crown. Ye cannot come at it without fighting your way to it through difficulties from without and from within; but the kingdom before you is sufficient to balance them all, though ye should be called to resist even unto blood. Prefer Christ's cross before the world's crown, and wants in the way of duty before ease and wealth in the way of sin: " Choose rather

to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

It is worth observing, that there is such a variety of scripture notions of heaven's happiness, as may suit every afflicted case of the saints. Are they oppressed? the day cometh in which they shall have the dominion. Is their honour laid in the dust? a throne to sit upon, a crown on their head, and a sceptre in their hand, will raise it up again. Are they reduced to poverty? heaven is a treasure. If they be forced to quit their own habitations, yet Christ's Father's house is ready for them. Are they driven to the wilderness? there is a city prepared for them. Are they banished from their native country? they shall inherit a better country. If they are deprived of public ordinances, the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple there, whither they are going; a temple, the doors of which none can shut: if their life be full of bitterness, heaven is a paradise for pleasure: if they groan under the remains of spiritual bondage, there is a glorious liberty abiding them. Do their defiled garments make them ashamed? the day cometh in which their robes shall be white, pure and spotless. The battle against flesh and blood, principalities and powers, is indeed sore; but a glorious triumph is awaiting them. If the toil and labours of the Christian life be great, there is an everlasting rest for them in heaven. Are they judged unworthy of society in the world? they shall be admitted into the society of angels in heaven. Do they complain of frequent interruptions of their communion with God? there they shall go no more out, but shall see his face for evermore. If they

are in darkness here, eternal light is there. If they grapple with death, there they shall have everlasting life. And, to sum up all in one word, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things."

Lastly, Let those who have no right to the kingdom of heaven be stirred up to seek it with all diligence. Now is the time wherein the children of wrath may become heirs of glory : and when the way to everlasting happiness is opened, it is no time to sit still and loiter. Raise up your hearts towards the glory that is to be revealed : and do not always lie along on this perishing earth. What can all your worldly enjoyments avail you, while you have no solid ground to expect heaven after this life is gone? Those riches and honours, profits and pleasures, that must be buried with us, and cannot accompany us into another world, are but a wretched portion, and will leave men comfortless at long run. Ah ! why are men so fond, in their lifetime, to receive their good things? why are they not rather in care to secure an interest in the kingdom of heaven, which would never be taken from them, but afford them a portion to make them happy through the ages of eternity? If you desire honour, there you may have the highest honour, and which will last when the world's honours are laid in the dust : if riches, heaven will yield you a treasure ; and there are pleasures for evermore. O ! be not despisers of the pleasant land, neither judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life : close with Christ, as he is offered to you in the gospel, and ye shall inherit all things. Walk in the way of holiness, and it will lead you to

the kingdom. Fight against sin and Satan, and ye shall receive the crown: forsake the world, and the doors of heaven will be open to receive you.

HEAD VI.

HELL.

MATTHEW xxv. 41.

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

WERE there no other place of eternal lodging but heaven, I should here have closed my discourse of man's eternal state; but seeing in the other world there is a prison for the wicked, as well as a palace for the saints, we must also inquire into that state of everlasting misery; the which the worst of men may well bear with, without crying, “Art thou come to torment us before the time?” since there is yet access to flee from the wrath to come: and all that can be said of it comes short of what the damned will feel; for who knoweth the power of God's anger?

The last thing our Lord did before he left the earth, was, “he lifted up his hands, and blessed his disciples.” But the last thing he will do before he leave the throne, is to curse and condemn his enemies; as we learn from the text, which contains the dreadful sentence wherein the everlasting misery of the wicked is wrapt up. In which three things may

be taken notice of: 1. The quality of the condemned, "Ye cursed." The Judge finds the curse of the law upon them as transgressors, and sends them away with it, from his presence, into hell, there to be fully executed upon them. 2. The punishment which they are adjudged to, and to which they were always bound over by virtue of the curse. And it is twofold: the punishment of loss, in separation from God and Christ, "Depart from me;" and the punishment of sense, in most exquisite and extreme torments, "Depart from me into fire." 3. The aggravations of their torments. (1.) They are ready for them, they are not to expect a moment's respite. The fire is prepared, and ready to catch hold of those who are thrown into it. (2.) They will have the society of devils in their torments, being shut up with them in hell. They must depart into the same fire prepared for Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and his angels; namely, other reprobate angels who fell with him, and became devils. This speaks further terror to the damned, that they must go into the same torments and place of torment with the devil and his angels. They hearkened to his temptations, and they must partake in his torments: his works they would do, and they must receive the wages, which is death. In this life they joined with devils, in enmity against God, and Christ, and the way of holiness; and in the other they must lodge with them. (3.) The last aggravation of their torment is the eternal duration thereof; they must depart into everlasting fire. This is what puts the topstone upon their misery, namely, that it shall never have an end.

DOCTRINE—*The wicked shall be shut up under the curse of God, in everlasting misery, with the devils in hell.*

After having evinced that there shall be a resurrection of the body, and a general judgment, I think it not needful to insist to prove the truth of future punishments. The same conscience there is in men of a future judgment, bears witness also of the truth of future punishments. And that the punishment of the damned shall not be annihilation, or a reducing them to nothing, will be clear in the progress of our discourse. In treating of this awful subject, I shall inquire into these four things: I. The curse under which the damned shall be shut up. II. Their misery under that curse. III. Their society with devils in this miserable state. IV. The eternity of the whole.

I. As to the curse under which the damned shall be shut up in hell: it is the terrible sentence of the law, by which they are bound over to the wrath of God as transgressors.

This curse hath its first-fruits on earth, which are a pledge of the whole lump that is to follow. And hence it is, that as temporal and eternal benefits are bound up together, under the same expressions, in the promise to the Lord's people—"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion," &c. relating both to the return from Babylon, and to the saints going to their eternal rest in heaven—even so, temporal and eternal miseries on the enemies of God are sometimes wrapt under one and the same ex-

pression in the threatening : “ For Tophet is ordained of old ; yea, for the king it is prepared : he hath made it deep and large ; the pile thereof is fire and much wood ; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.” Many a lash in the dark doth conscience give the wicked. The never-dying worm is already begun to gnaw them ? And there is not one of these but they may call it Joseph, for “ the Lord shall add another ;” or rather Gad, for “ a troop cometh.” These drops of wrath are terrible forebodings of the full shower which is to follow. Sometimes they are given up to their vile affections, that they have no more command over them : so their lusts grow up more and more towards perfection, if I may so speak. As in heaven grace comes to its perfection, so in hell sin arrives at its highest pitch ; and as sin is thus advancing upon the man, he is the nearer and the liker to hell. There are three things that have a fearful aspect here : First, When every thing that might do good to men’s souls is blasted to them, so that their blessings are cursed : sermons, prayers, admonitions, and reproofs, which are powerful towards others, are quite inefficacious to them. Secondly, When men go on sinning still, in the face of plain rebukes from the Lord, in ordinances and providences : God meets them with rods in the way of their sin, as it were striking them back ; yet they rush forward. What can be more like hell, where the Lord is always smiting, and the damned always sinning against him ? Lastly, When every thing in one’s lot is turned into fuel to one’s lusts. Thus adversity and prosperity, poverty and wealth, the want of ordinances, and the enjoyment of them, do all but nourish the corruptions of many.

But the full harvest follows, in that misery which they shall for ever lie under in hell; that wrath which, by virtue of the curse, shall come upon them to the uttermost: the which is the curse fully executed. This black cloud opens upon them, and the terrible thunderbolt strikes them, by that dreadful voice from the throne, "Depart from me, ye cursed;" which will give the whole wicked world a dismal view of what is in the bosom of the curse. It is, (1.) A voice of extreme indignation and wrath, a furious rebuke from the Lion of the tribe of Judah. His looks will be most terrible to them; his eyes will cast flames of fire on them; and his words will pierce their hearts like envenomed arrows. When he will thus speak them out of his presence for ever, and by his word chase them away from before the throne, they will see how keenly wrath burns in his heart against them for their sins. (2.) It is a voice of extreme disdain and contempt from the Lord. Time was when they were pitied, besought to pity themselves, and to be the Lord's; but they despised him, they would none of him: but now shall they be buried out of his sight, under everlasting contempt. (3.) It is a voice of extreme hatred. Hereby the Lord shuts them out of his bowels of love and mercy: "Depart, ye cursed." Lastly, It is a voice of eternal rejection from the Lord. He commands them to be gone, and so casts them off for ever. Thus the doors of heaven are shut against them; the gulf is fixed between them and it, and they are driven to the pit.

USE I.—Let all those who, being yet in their natural state, are under the curse, consider this, and

flee to Jesus Christ betimes, that they may be delivered from it. How can ye sleep in that state, being wrapt up in the curse! Jesus Christ is now saying unto you, ‘Come, ye cursed, I will take the curse from off you, and give you the blessing.’ The waters of the sanctuary are now running to heal the cursed ground; take heed to improve them for that end to your own souls, and fear it as hell to get no spiritual advantage thereby. II. Let all cursers consider this, whose mouths are filled with cursing themselves and others. He who clothes himself with cursing, shall find the curse “come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones,” if repentance prevent it not. He shall get all his imprecations against himself fully answered, in that day wherein he stands before the tribunal of God; and shall find the killing weight of the curse of God, which he makes light of now.

II. I proceed to speak of the misery of the damned under that curse; a misery which the tongues of men and angels cannot sufficiently express. God always acts like himself: no favours can be equal to his, and his wrath and terrors are without a parallel. As the saints in heaven are advanced to the highest pitch of happiness, so the damned in hell arrive at the height of misery. Two things here I shall soberly inquire into: the punishment of loss, and the punishment of sense in hell. But since these also are such things as eye hath not seen nor ear heard, we must leave a large void for the unknown land which the day will discover.

First, The punishment of loss which the damned shall undergo, is separation from the Lord, as we

learn from the text: "Depart from me, ye cursed." This will be a stone upon their grave's mouth, as the "talent of lead," that will hold them down for ever. They shall be eternally separated from God and Christ. Christ is the way to the Father; but the way, as to them, shall be everlastingly blocked up, and the great gulf fixed: so shall they be shut up in a state of eternal separation from God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They will be locally separated from the man Christ, and shall never come into the seat of the blessed, where he appears in his glory, but be cast out "into outer darkness." They cannot indeed be locally separated from God; they cannot be in a place where he is not, since he is and will be present every where: "If I make my bed in hell," says the Psalmist, "behold thou art there." But they shall be miserable beyond expression, in a relative separation from God. Though he will be present in the very centre of their souls, (if I may so express it,) while they are wrapt up in fiery flames in utter darkness, they shall never taste more of his goodness and bounty, nor have the least glimpse of hope from him.

This separation of the wicked from God will be, (1.) An involuntary separation. Now they depart from him, they will not come to him, though they are called, entreated, and exhorted to come: but then they shall be driven away from him, when they would gladly abide with him. Although the question, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" is frequent now among the despisers of the gospel, there will be no such question among all the damned crew; for then they will see that man's happiness is only to be found in the enjoyment of God,

and that the loss of him is a loss that can never be balanced. (2.) It will also be a total and utter separation. Although the wicked are in this life separated from God, yet there is a kind of intercourse between them: he gives them many good gifts, and they give him at least some good words; so that the peace is not altogether hopeless. But then shall there be a total separation, the damned being cast into utter darkness, where there will not be the least gleam of light or favour from the Lord; the which will put an end to all their fair words to him. Lastly, It shall be a final separation; they will part with him never more to meet, being shut up under everlasting horror and despair.

This punishment of loss, in a total and final separation from God, is a misery beyond what mortals can conceive, and which the dreadful experience of the damned can only sufficiently unfold. But that we may have some conception of the horror of it, let these following things be considered:—

1. God is the chief good, and therefore to be separated from him must be the chief evil. Our native country, our relations, and our life are good; and therefore to be deprived of them we reckon a great evil; and the better any thing is, so much the greater evil is the loss of it. Wherefore, God being the chief good, and no good comparable to him, there can be no loss so great as the loss of God. The full enjoyment of him is the highest pinnacle of happiness the creature is capable of arriving at: to be fully and finally separated from him, must then be the lowest step of misery which the rational creature can be reduced to. To be cast off by men, by

good men, by the best of men, is heavy : what must it then be to be rejected of God, of goodness itself !

2. God is the fountain of all goodness, from which all goodness flows unto the creatures, and by which it is continued in them, and to them. Whatsoever goodness or perfection, natural as well as moral, is in any creature, it is from God, and depends upon him, as the light is from, and depends on the sun ; for every created being, as such, is a dependent one. Wherefore, a total separation from God, wherein all comfortable communication betwixt God and a rational creature is absolutely blocked up, must of necessity bring along with it a total eclipse of all light of comfort and ease whatsoever. Our Lord tells us, “ There is none good but one, that is God.” Nothing good or comfortable is originally from the creature : whatever good or comfortable thing one finds in one’s self, as health of body, peace of mind ; whatever sweetness, rest, pleasure, or delight one finds in other creatures, as in meat, drink, arts, and sciences ; all these are but some faint rays of the divine perfections, communicated from God to the creature, and depending on a constant influence from him for their conservation, which failing, they would immediately be gone ; for it is impossible that any created thing can be to us more or better than what God makes it to be.

Being separated from God, they are deprived of all good. The good things which they set their hearts upon in this world, are beyond their reach there. The covetous man cannot enjoy his wealth there, nor the ambitious man his honours, nor the

sensual man his pleasures ; no, not a drop of water to cool his tongue. And as for those good things they despised in the world, they shall never more hear of them nor see them. No offers of Christ there, no pardons, no peace ; no wells of salvation in the pit of destruction. In one word, they shall be deprived of whatever might comfort them, being totally and finally separated from God, the fountain of all goodness.

3. Man naturally desires to be happy, being withal conscious to himself that he is not self-sufficient ; and therefore has ever a desire of something, without himself, to make him happy : and the soul being, by its natural make and constitution, capable of enjoying God, and nothing else being commensurable to its desires, it can never have true and solid rest, till it rest in the enjoyment of God. This desire of happiness the rational creature can never lay aside, no not in hell. Now, while the wicked are on earth, they seek their satisfaction in the creature ; and when one fails, they go to another : thus they put off their time in the world, deceiving their own souls, and luring them on with vain hopes. But in the other world, all comfort in the creatures having failed together at once, and the shadows they are now pursuing having all of them vanished in a moment, they shall be totally and finally separated from God, and see they have thus lost him. So the doors of earth and heaven both are shut against them at once.

4. The damned shall know that some are perfectly happy in the enjoyment of that God from whom they themselves are separate : and this will

aggravate the sense of their loss, that they can never have any share with these happy ones. Being separated from God, they are separated from the society of the glorified saints and angels. They may "see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom," but can never come into their company; being as unclean lepers thrust out without the camp, and excommunicated from the presence of the Lord and of all his holy ones.

5. They will remember that time was when they might have been made partakers of the blessed state of the saints, in their enjoyment of God; and this will aggravate their sense of the loss. Despisers of the gospel will remember with bitterness, that Jesus Christ, with all his benefits, was offered to them; that they were exhorted, entreated, and pressed to accept, but would not; and that they were warned of the misery they feel, and exhorted to flee from the wrath to come, but they would not hearken. Some will remember that there was a probability of their being eternally happy; that some time they seemed to stand fair for it, and were not far from the kingdom of God; that they had once almost consented to the blessed bargain, the pen was in their hand (as it were) to sign the marriage-contract betwixt Christ and their souls; but unhappily they dropped it, and turned back from the Lord to their lusts again.

Lastly, They will see the loss to be irrecoverable: that they must eternally lie under it, never, never to be repaired. Might the damned, after millions of ages in hell, regain what they have lost, it would be some ground of hope; but the prize is gone, and can

never be recovered. They knew not the worth of it, till it was irrecoverably lost. They lost heaven for earthly profits and pleasures, and now both are gone together from them. The drunkard's cups are gone, the covetous man's gain, the voluptuous man's carnal delights, and the sluggard's ease: nothing is left to comfort them now. The happiness they lost remains, indeed, but they can have no part in it for ever.

USE.—Sinners, be persuaded to come to God through Jesus Christ, uniting with him through a Mediator, that ye may be preserved from this fearful separation from him. O be afraid to live in a state of separation from God, lest that which you now make your choice become your eternal punishment hereafter. Do not reject communion with God, cast not off the communion of saints, for it will be the misery of the damned to be driven out from that communion. Cease to build up the wall of separation betwixt God and you, by continuing in your sinful courses: repent rather in time, and so pull it down; lest the top stone be laid upon it, and it stand for ever between you and happiness. Tremble at the thoughts of rejection and separation from God. By whomsoever men are rejected upon earth, they ordinarily find some to pity them; but, if ye be thus separated from God, ye will find all doors shut against you. O horrid stupidity! men are in a mighty care and concern to prevent worldly losses: but they are in hazard of losing the enjoyment of God for ever and ever; in hazard of losing heaven, the communion of the blessed, and all good things for soul and body in another world, yet as careless in that matter as if

they were incapable of thought. O ! compare this day with the day our text aims at. This day is heaven opened to them who hitherto have rejected Christ, and yet there is room, if they will come ; but that day the doors shall be shut. Now Christ is saying unto you, *Come* ; then he will say, *Depart* ; seeing ye would not come when ye were bidden.

Secondly, The damned shall be punished in hell with the punishment of sense ; they must depart from God into everlasting fire.

1. As, in heaven, grace being brought to its perfection, profit and pleasure do also arrive at their height there ; so sin being come to its height in hell, the evil of punishment doth also arrive at its perfection there. Wherefore, as the joys in heaven are far greater than any joys which the saints obtain on earth, so the punishments of hell must be greater than any earthly torments whatsoever ; not only in respect of the continuance of them, but also in respect of the vehemency and exquisiteness.

2. Why are the things of the other world represented to us in an earthly dress in the word, but that the weakness of our capacities in such matters, which the Lord is pleased to condescend unto, does require it ; it being always supposed, that these things of the other world are in their kind more perfect than that by which they are represented ?

3. Job complains heavily under the chastisements of God's fatherly hand : " The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit." But how will the spirits of the damned be pierced with the arrows of revenging justice ! how will they be drunk up with the poison of

the curse on these arrows ! how vehement must that fire be that pierceth directly into the soul, and makes an everlasting burning in the spirit, the most lively and tender part of a man, wherein wounds or pain are most intolerable !

Lastly, The preparation of this fire evinceth the inexpressible vehemency and dreadfulness of it. The text calls it prepared fire, yea, the prepared fire, by way of eminency. It is a fearful thing to fall into a fire, or to be shut up in a fiery furnace on earth ; but the terror of these evanisheth, when one considers how fearful it is to fall into the hands of the living God, which is the lot of the damned : for “ who shall dwell with the devouring fire ? who shall dwell with everlasting burnings ? ”

As to another point, namely, The properties of the torments in hell :

1. The damned shall ever be under deepest impressions of God’s vindictive justice against them : and this fire will melt their souls within them like wax. Who knows the power of that wrath which had such an effect on the Mediator standing in the room of sinners, “ My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels ? ” Their minds shall be filled with the terrible apprehensions of God’s implacable wrath : and whatever they can think upon, past, present, or to come, will aggravate their torment and anguish.

2. They will be most exquisite and vehement torments, causing “ weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” They are represented to us under the notion of pangs in travail, which are very sharp and exquisite. So says the rich man in hell : “ I am

tormented (to wit, as one in the pangs of child-bearing) in this flame." It is true, there will be degrees of torment in hell: "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, than for Chorazin and Bethsaida." But the least load of wrath there will be insupportable; for how can the heart of the creature endure, or his hands be strong, when God himself is a consuming fire to him?

3. They will be uninterrupted: there is no intermission there; no ease, no, not for a moment. They "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Few are so tossed in this world, but sometimes they get rest: but the damned shall get none; they took their rest in the time appointed of God for labour. No storms are readily seen, but there is some space between showers: but no intermission in the storm that falls on the wicked in hell. There deep will be calling unto deep, and the waves of wrath continually rolling over them. There the heavens will be always black to them, and they shall have a perpetual night, but no rest: "They have no rest day nor night."

4. They will be unpitied. The punishment inflicted on the greatest malefactors on earth, do draw forth some compassion from them who behold them in their torments: but the damned shall have none to pity them. God will not pity them, but "laugh at their calamity." The blessed company in heaven shall rejoice in the execution of God's righteous judgment, and sing while the smoke riseth up for ever: "And again they said, Alleluia: and her smoke rose up for ever and ever."

Lastly, To complete their misery, their torments

shall be eternal: "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Ah! what a frightful case is this, to be tormented in the whole body and soul, and that not with one kind of torment, but many; all of these most exquisite, and all this without any intermission, and without pity from any! what heart can conceive those things without horror? Nevertheless, if this most miserable case were at length to have an end, that would afford some comfort; but the torments of the damned will have no end: of the which more afterwards.

USE.—Learn from this, (1.) The evil of sin. It is a stream that will carry down the sinner, till he be swallowed up in an ocean of wrath. The pleasures of sin are bought too dear at the rate of everlasting burnings. What availed the rich man's purple clothing and sumptuous fare, when in hell he was wrapt up in purple flames, and could not have a drop of water to cool his tongue? Alas! that men should indulge themselves in sin, which will be such bitterness in the end! that they should hug that serpent in their bosom, that will sting them to the heart, and gnaw out their bowels at length! (2.) What a God he is with whom we have to do; what a hatred he bears to sin, and how severely he punisheth it. Know the Lord to be most just as well as most merciful, and think not that he is such a one as you are: away with that fatal mistake ere it be too late: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." The fire prepared for the devil and his

angels, as dark as it is, will serve to discover God to be a severe revenger of sin. Lastly, The absolute necessity of fleeing to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith; the same necessity of repentance, and holiness of heart and life. The avenger of blood is pursuing thee, O sinner! haste and escape to the city of refuge. Wash now in the fountain of the Mediator's blood, that you may not perish in the lake of fire. Leave thy sins, else they will ruin thee: kill them, else they will be thy death for ever.

Let not the terror of hell put thee upon hardening thy heart more, as it may do, if thou entertain that wicked thought, namely, "There is no hope," which perhaps is more rife among the hearers of the gospel than many are aware of. But there is hope for the worst of sinners, who will come in to Jesus Christ. If there are no good qualifications in thee, (as certainly there can be none in a natural man, none in any man, but what are received from Christ,) know that he has not suspended thy welcome on any good qualifications: do thou take himself and his salvation, freely offered unto all to whom the gospel comes: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." "Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." It is true, thou art a sinful creature, and canst not repent; thou art unholy, and canst not make thyself holy: nay, thou hast essayed to repent, to forsake sin, and to be holy, but still missed of repentance, reformation, and holiness; and therefore, "Thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." Truly, no marvel that the success has not answered thy expectation, since thou hast always begun thy

work amiss. But do thou, first of all, honour God, by believing the testimony he has given of his Son, namely, that eternal life is in him: and honour the Son of God, by believing on him, that is, embracing and falling in with the free offer of Christ, and of his salvation from sin and from wrath, made to thee in the gospel; trusting in him confidently for righteousness to thy justification, and also for sanctification; seeing “of God he is made unto us both righteousness and sanctification.” Then, if thou hast as much credit to give to the word of God, as thou wouldst allow to the word of an honest man offering thee a gift, and saying, ‘Take it, and it is thine;’ thou mayest believe that God is thy God, Christ is thine, his salvation is thine, thy sins are pardoned, thou hast strength in him for repentance and for holiness; for all these are made over to thee in the free offer of the gospel.

III. The damned shall have the society of devils in their miserable state in hell: for they must depart into “fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” O horrible company! O frightful association! who would choose to dwell in a palace haunted by devils? They go about now as roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour: but then shall they be confined in their den with their prey. They shall be filled to the brim with the wrath of God, and receive the full torment, which they tremble in expectation of, being cast into the fire prepared for them. What horrible anguish will seize the damned, finding themselves in the lake of fire, with the devil who deceived them; drawn hither with the silken cords of temptation, by these wicked spirits;

and bound with them in everlasting chains under darkness! “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

O! that men would consider this in time, renounce the devil and his lusts, and join themselves to the Lord in faith and holiness. Why should men choose that company in this world, and delight in that society, they would not desire to associate with in the other world? Those who like not the company of the saints on earth, will get none of it in eternity: but, as godless company is their delight now, they will afterwards get enough of it, when they have an eternity to pass in the blaspheming society of devils and reprobates in hell. Let those who use to invoke the ‘devil to take them,’ soberly consider, that the company so often invited will be terrible at last when come.

IV. And *lastly*, Let us consider the eternity of the whole, the everlasting continuance of the miserable state of the damned in hell.

1. If I could, I should show what eternity is; I mean, the creatures’ eternity. But who can measure the waters of the ocean? or who can tell you the days, years, and ages of eternity, which are infinitely more than the drops of the ocean? None can comprehend eternity but the eternal God. Eternity is an ocean, whereof we will never see the shore; it is a deep, where we can find no bottom; a labyrinth, from whence we cannot extricate ourselves, and where we shall ever lose the door. There are two things one may say of it: (1.) It has a begin-

ning. God's eternity has no beginning, but the creatures' eternity has. Some time there was no lake of fire: and those who have been there for some thousands of years, were once in time as we now are. But, (2.) It shall never have an end. The first who entered into the eternity of woe, is as far from the end of it, as the last who shall go thither will be at his entry. They who have launched out farthest into that ocean, are as far from land as they were the first moment they went into it: and, thousands of ages after this, they will be as far from it as ever. Wherefore, eternity, which is before us, is a duration that hath a beginning but no end. It is a beginning without a middle, a beginning without an end. After millions of years, still it is a beginning. God's wrath, in hell, will ever be "the wrath to come." But there is no middle in eternity. When millions of ages are past in eternity, what is past bears no proportion to what is to come: no, not so much as one drop of water, falling from the tip of one's finger, bears to all the waters of the ocean. There is no end of it: while God is, it shall be. It is a continual succession of ages, a glass always running, which shall never run out.

Observe the continual succession of hours, days, months, and years, how one still follows upon another; and think of eternity, wherein there is a continual succession without end. When you go out in the night, and behold the stars of heaven, how they cannot be numbered for multitude, think of the ages of eternity; considering, withal, there is a certain definite number of the stars, but no number of the ages of eternity. When you see a water run-

ning, think how vain a thing it would be to sit down by it, and wait till it should run out, that you may pass over : look how new water still succeeds to that which passeth by you ; and therein you will have an image of eternity, which is a river that never dries up. They who wear rings have an image of eternity on their fingers ; and they who handle the wheel have an emblem of eternity before them ; for to which part soever of the ring or wheel one looks, one will still see another part beyond it ; and on whatsoever moment of eternity you condescend, there is still another beyond it. When you are abroad in the fields, and behold the piles of grass on the earth, which no man can reckon, think with yourselves, that, were as many thousands of years to come as there are piles of grass on the ground, even those would have an end at length ; but eternity will have none. When you look to a mountain, imagine in your hearts how long it would be ere that mountain should be removed by a little bird coming but once every thousand years, and carrying away but one grain of the dust thereof at once : the mountain would at length be removed that way, and brought to an end ; but eternity will never end. Suppose this with respect to all the mountains of the earth ; nay, with respect to the whole globe of the earth. The grains of dust, whereof the whole earth is made up, are not infinite ; and therefore the last grain would, at long run, come to be carried away in the way supposed ; but when that slowest work would be brought to an end, eternity would be, in effect, but beginning.

These are some rude draughts of eternity ; and

now add misery and woe to this eternity, what tongue can express it ! what heart can conceive it ! in what balance can that misery and that woe be weighed !

2. Let us take a view of what is eternal in the state of the damned in hell. Whatsoever is included in the fearful sentence, determining their eternal state, is everlasting : therefore, all the doleful ingredients of their miserable state will be everlasting ; they will never end. The text expressly declares the fire into which they must depart, to be everlasting fire. And our Lord elsewhere tells us, that in hell the fire shall never be quenched. Seeing, then, the damned must depart, as cursed ones, into everlasting fire, it is evident that,

1st, The damned themselves shall be eternal : they will have a being for ever, and will never be substantially destroyed or annihilated. To what end is the fire eternal, if those who are cast into it be not eternally in it ? It is plain, the everlasting continuance of the fire is an aggravation of the misery of the damned ; but surely if they be annihilated, or substantially destroyed, it is all a case to them, whether the fire be everlasting or not. Nay, but they depart into everlasting fire, to be everlastingly punished in it : “ These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Thus, the execution of the sentence is a certain discovery of the meaning of it : “ The worm that dieth not,” must have a subject to live in : they who shall have “ no rest, day nor night,” but “ shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever,” will certainly have a being for ever and ever, and not be brought into a state of eternal rest in annihilation. Destroyed indeed they shall be : but

their destruction will be an “everlasting destruction;” a destruction of their well-being, but not of their being. What is destroyed, is not therefore annihilated: “Art thou come to destroy us?” said the devil unto Jesus Christ. Howbeit the devils are afraid of torment, not of annihilation: “Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” The state of the damned is indeed a state of death: but such a death it is, as is opposite only to a happy life, as is clear from other notions of their state, which necessarily include an eternal existence, of which before. As they who are dead in sin, are dead to God and holiness, yet live to sin; so dying in hell, they live, but separate from God and his favour, in which life lies. They shall ever be under the pangs of death; ever dying, but never dead, or absolutely void of life. How desirable would such a death be to them! but it will fly from them for ever. Could each one kill another there, or could they, with their own hands, rend themselves into lifeless pieces, their misery would quickly be at an end: but there they must live who choosed death and refused life; for there death lives, and the end ever begins.

2dly, The curse shall lie upon them eternally, as the everlasting chain, to hold them in the everlasting fire; a chain that shall never be loosed, being fixed for ever about them by the dreadful sentence of the eternal judgment. This chain, which spurns the united force of devils held fast by it, is too strong to be broken by men, who, being solemnly anathematized and devoted to destruction, can never be recovered to any other use.

3dly, Their punishment shall be eternal: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." They will be for ever separated from God and Christ, and from the society of the holy angels and saints; between whom and them an impassable gulf will be fixed: "Between us and you," says Abraham, in the parable, to the rich man in hell, "there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." They shall for ever have the horrible society of the devil and his angels. There will be no change of company for evermore, in that region of darkness. Their torment in the fire will be everlasting: they must live for ever in it. Of what nature soever hell-fire is, no question, the same God who kept the bodies of the three children from burning in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, can also keep the bodies of the damned from any such dissolution by hell-fire, as may infer privation of life.

Lastly, Their knowledge and sense of their misery shall be eternal, and they shall assuredly know that it will be eternal. How desirable would it be to them, to have their senses for ever locked up, and to lose the consciousness of their own misery! as one may rationally suppose it to fare at length with some, in the punishment of death inflicted on them on earth; and as it is with some mad people in their miserable case: but that agrees not with the notion of torment for ever and ever, nor the worm that dieth not. Nay, they will ever have a lively feeling of their misery, and strongest impressions of the wrath of God against them. And that dreadful intimation of the eternity of their punishment, made to them

by the Judge, in their sentence, will fix such impressions of the eternity of their miserable state upon their minds, as they will never be able to lay aside, but will continue with them evermore to complete their misery. This will fill them with everlasting despair; a most tormenting passion, which will continually rend their hearts, as it were, in a thousand pieces. To see floods of wrath ever coming and never to cease; to be ever in torment, and withal to know there shall never, never be a release, will be the top-stone put on the misery of the damned. If “hope deferred maketh the heart sick,” how killing will be hope rooted up, slain outright, and buried for ever out of the creature’s sight!

Lastly, I might here show the reasonableness of the eternity of the punishment of the damned; but having already spoken of it, in vindicating the justice of God in his subjecting men in their natural state to eternal wrath, I only remind you of three things: (1.) The infinite dignity of the party offended by sin, requires an infinite punishment to be inflicted for the vindication of his honour; since the demerit of sin riseth according to the dignity and excellency of the person against whom it is committed. The party offended is the great God, the chief good; the offender a vile worm, in respect of perfection infinitely distant from God, to whom he is indebted for all that ever he had implying any good or perfection whatsoever. This then requires an infinite punishment to be inflicted on the sinner; the which, since it cannot in him be infinite in value, must needs be infinite in duration, that is to say, eternal. Sin is a kind of infinite evil, as it wrongs an infinite God; and the guilt

and defilement thereof is never taken away, but endures for ever, unless the Lord himself in mercy doth remove it. God, who is offended, is eternal, his being never comes to an end: the sinful soul is immortal, and the man shall live for ever: the sinner being without strength to expiate his guilt, can never put away the offence; therefore it ever remains, unless the Lord do put it away himself, as in the elect, by his Son's blood. Wherefore, the party offended, the offender, and the offence, ever remaining, the punishment cannot but be eternal. (2.) The sinner would have continued the course of his provocations against God for ever without end, if God had not put an end to it by death. As long as they were capable to act against him in this world, they did it; and therefore justly will he act against them while he is, that is, for ever. God, who judgeth of the will, intents, and inclinations of the heart, may justly do against sinners in punishing, as they would have done against him in sinning. Lastly, That the wicked be punished for their wickedness is just; and it is no wise inconsistent with justice. The misery under which they sin, can neither free them from the debt of obedience, nor excuse their sinning and make it blameless. The creature, as a creature, is bound unto obedience to his Creator; and no punishment inflicted on him can free from it, more than the malefactor's prison, irons, whipping, do set him at liberty to commit anew the crimes for which he is imprisoned or whipped. Neither can the torments of the damned excuse or make blameless their horrible sinning under them; more than exquisite pains, inflicted upon men on earth, can excuse their mur-

muring, fretting, and blaspheming against God under them : for it is not the wrath of God, but their own wicked nature, that is the true cause of their sinning under it; and so the holy Jesus bore the wrath of God, without so much as one unbecoming thought of God, and far less any unbecoming word.

USE I.—Here is a measuring reed : O that men would apply it ! 1. Apply it to your time in this world, and you will find your time to be very short. A prospect of much time to come, proves the ruin of many souls. Men will be reckoning their time by years, (like that rich man, Luke xii. 19, 20.) when, it may be, there are not many hours of it to run. But reckon as you will, laying your time to the measuring-reed of eternity, you will see your age is nothing. What a small and inconsiderate point is sixty, eighty, or a hundred years, in respect of eternity ! Compared with eternity, there is a greater disproportion than between a hair's breadth and the circumference of the whole earth. Why do we sleep then in such a short day, while we are in hazard of losing rest through the long night of eternity ? 2. Apply it to your endeavours for salvation, and they will be found very scanty. When men are pressed to diligence in their salvation-work, they are ready to say, ' To what purpose is this waste ? ' Alas ! if it were to be judged by our diligence, what it is that we have in view ; as to the most part of us, no man could thereby conjecture that we have eternity in view. If we duly considered eternity, we could not but conclude, that, to leave no means appointed of God un-essay'd till we get our salvation secured ; to refuse rest or comfort in any thing till we are sheltered

under the wings of the Mediator; to pursue our great interest with the utmost vigour; to cut off lusts dear as right hands and right eyes; to set our faces resolutely against all difficulties, and fight our way through all the opposition made by the devil, the world, and the flesh; are, all of them together, little enough for eternity.

USE II.—Here is a balance of the sanctuary, by which one may understand the lightness of what is falsely thought weighty; and the weight of some things, by many reckoned to be very light.

First, Some things seem very weighty, which, weighed in this balance, will be found very light. (1.) Weigh the world, and all that is in it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and the whole will be found light in the balance of eternity. Weigh herein all worldly profits, gains, and advantages; and you will quickly see that a thousand worlds will not quit the cost of the eternity of woe: “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Weigh the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, with the fire that is everlasting, and you must account yourselves fools and madmen to run the hazard of the one for the other. (2.) Weigh your afflictions in this balance, and you will find the heaviest of them very light, in respect of the weight of eternal anguish. Impatience under affliction, especially when worldly troubles so embitter men’s spirits that they cannot relish the glad tidings of the gospel, speaks great regardlessness of eternity. Such a one will stoop, and take up his cross, whatever it be, thinking it enough to escape eternal wrath. (3.) Weigh the most dif-

ficult and uneasy duties of religion here, and you will no more reckon the yoke of Christ insupportable. Repentance and bitter mourning for sin on earth, are very light in comparison of eternal weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth in hell. To wrestle with God in prayer, weeping, and making supplication for the blessing in time, is far easier than to lie under the curse through all eternity. Mortification of the most beloved lust is a light thing, in comparison with the second death in hell. Lastly, Weigh your convictions in this balance. O how heavy do these lie upon many, till they get them shaken off! They are not disposed to fall in with them, but strive to get clear of them, as of a mighty burden. But the worm of an ill conscience will neither die nor sleep in hell, though one may now lull it asleep for a time. And certainly it is easier to entertain the sharpest convictions in this life, so as they may lead one to Christ, than to have them fixed for ever in the conscience, while in hell one is totally and finally separated from him.

Secondly, But, on the other hand, (I.) Weigh sin in this balance; and, though now it seems but a light thing to you, ye will find it a weight sufficient to turn up an eternal weight of wrath upon you. Even idle words, vain thoughts, and unprofitable actions, weighed in this balance, and considered as following the sinner into eternity, will each of them be heavier than the sand of the sea: time idly spent will make a weary eternity. Now is your seed-time: thoughts, words, and actions, are the seed sown; eternity is the harvest. Though the seed now lies under the clod, unregarded by most men, every the least grain shall

spring up at length, and the fruit will be according to the seed: "For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

(2.) Weigh in this balance your time and opportunities of grace and salvation, and you will find them very weighty. Precious time and seasons of grace, Sabbaths, communions, prayers, sermons, and the like, are by many now-a-days made light of: but the day is coming, when one of these will be reckoned more valuable than a thousand worlds, by those who now have the least value for them. When they are gone for ever, and the loss cannot be retrieved, those will see the worth of them, who will not now see it.

USE III. and last.—Be warned and stirred up to "flee from the wrath to come." Mind eternity, and closely ply the work of your salvation. What are you doing, while you are not so doing? Is heaven a fable, or hell a mere scare-crow? must we live eternally, and will we be at no more pains to escape everlasting misery? will faint wishes take the kingdom of heaven by force? and will such drowsy endeavours as most men satisfy themselves with, be accounted fleeing from the wrath to come? Ye who have already fled to Christ, up and be doing: ye have begun the work; go on, loiter not, but "work out your salvation with fear and trembling:" "fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Remember ye are not yet ascended into heaven; ye are but in your middle state. The "everlasting arms" have drawn you out of the gulph of wrath ye were plunged into in your natural state;

they are still underneath you, that ye can never fall down into it again: nevertheless, ye have not yet got up to the top of the rock: the deep below you is frightful; look at it, and hasten your ascent. Ye who are yet in your natural state, lift up your eyes, and take a view of the eternal state. Arise, ye profane persons, ye ignorant ones, ye formal hypocrites, strangers to the power of godliness, “flee from the wrath to come.” Let not the young adventure to delay a moment longer, nor the old put off this work any more: “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; lest he swear in his wrath that ye shall never enter into his rest.” It is no time to linger in a state of sin, as in Sodom, when fire and brimstone are coming down on it from the Lord. Take warning in time. They who are in hell are not troubled with such warnings, but are enraged against themselves that they slighted the warning when they had it.

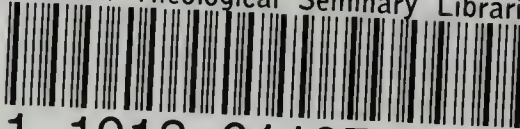
Consider, I pray you, (1.) How uneasy it is to lie one whole night on a soft bed in perfect health, when one very fain would have a sleep, but cannot get it, sleep being departed from him! How often will one in that case wish for rest! how full of tossings to and fro! But, ah! how dreadful must it then be to lie in sorrow, wrapt up in scorching flames through long eternity, in that place where they have no rest day nor night! (2.) How terrible would it be to live under the violent pains of the cholic or gravel for forty or sixty years together, without any intermission! Yet that is but a very small thing in comparison of eternal separation from God, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched.

(3.) Eternity is an awful thought : O long, long, endless eternity ! But will not every moment in eternity of woe seem a month, and every hour a year, in that most wretched and desperate condition ? Hence ever and ever, as it were a double eternity. The sick man in the night, tossing to and fro on his bed, says, ‘ It will never be day : ’ complains that his pain ever continues ; never, never abates. Are these petty time-eternities, which men form to themselves in their own imaginations, so very grievous ? Alas ! then, how grievous, how utterly insupportable, must real eternity of woe, and all manner of miseries be ! Lastly, There will be space enough there to reflect on all the ills of one’s heart and life, which one cannot get time to think of now : and to see that all that was said of the impenitent sinner’s hazard was true, and that the half was not told. There will be space enough in eternity to carry on delayed repentance, to rue one’s follies when it is too late ; and, in a state past remedy, to speak forth these fruitless wishes—‘ O that I had never been born ! that the womb had been my grave, and I had never seen the sun ! O that I had taken warning in time, and fled from this wrath, while the door of mercy was standing open to me ! O that I had never heard the gospel, that I had lived in some corner of the world, where a Saviour and the great salvation were not once named ! ’ But all in vain. What is done cannot be undone : the opportunity is lost, and can never be retrieved : time is gone, and cannot be recalled. Wherefore, improve time while you have it ; and do not wilfully ruin yourselves by stopping your ear to the gospel call.

And now, if ye would be saved from the wrath to come, and never go into this place of torment, take no rest in your natural state; believe the sinfulness and misery of it, and labour to get out of it quickly, fleeing unto Jesus Christ by faith. Sin in you is the seed of hell; and, if the guilt and reigning power of it be not removed in time, they will bring you to the second death in eternity. There is no way to get them removed but by receiving Christ, as he is offered in the gospel, for justification and sanctification: and he is now offered to you with all his salvation: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.—And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Jesus Christ is the Mediator of peace, and the Fountain of holiness: he it is who delivereth us from the wrath to come. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And the terrors of hell, as well as the joys of heaven, are set before you, to stir you up to a cordial receiving of him with all his salvation; and to determine you unto the way of faith and holiness, in which alone you can escape the everlasting fire. May the Lord himself make them effectual to that end!

Thus far of man's eternal state; the which, because it is eternal, admits no succeeding one for ever.

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